

SOME HOPE AND SOME DESPAIR

Issue 9, Sometime 2006, 3 dollars



ANTISECT
BMX BANDITS
BURY THE LIVING
DRIFT AGE
HAGAR THE WOMB
and more...

INTRO

I'M BACK

I had to take a little break from life there. My Dad died and while I mentioned before that we weren't that close especially as of late, it meant making a trip back to Hawaii and that was thought provoking to say the least.

First of all, I've sort of reconnected with my Dad's side of the family, which is nice. My Dad was very much a born again Christian. When I was young that would drive me up the wall but now I'm just too tired to fight it. He would send me tons of those Chick Tracts and I would just file them away. He would just talk about Jesus and God and I would just say, "yes, yes, yes". It just wasn't worth getting into. Still, I was a little worried that I was going back to Hawaii for a weekend of proselytizing and church type stuff. But it wasn't like that at all. I hung out with my two half sisters and two half brothers and they were cool. I mean they're young, all in their early 20's. But it was good. I really want to keep in touch with them. It was a bit of a relief because with my relationship so distant with my father, it crossed my mind that they might have blamed me. I honestly didn't even know that he was in the hospital for the past month before passing. But they were there with him every day and I worried that they might have resented me for not being there. But it was good. We were just happy to see each other.

The memorial service was strange for me. It was the first time for me to hang out with my sisters since they were really little and it was really the first time ever hanging out with my brothers. Over 300 people showed up for the services, most from my Dad's church work. But a lot of them were old friends that even I sort of recognized. It was strange. The photo of my Dad used for the memorial service was a recent one, so I was having a hard time connecting that picture to how I actually remembered my Dad. I still thought of him as the guy from back in the '80s, which is the last time that we hung out with any regularity. It was all very surreal and dreamlike.

The night of the memorial service, we all went over to my Uncle Harvey and Auntie Alice's house. We stayed up for hours talking just like when I was a little kid. It was very nostalgic and I had the best time talking with my cousins, Brookie and Kerrie, who I used to be very close to. Sometime I'd like to try and write more about them. For now, I just want to get back into the writing swing.

As I write this, I'm in the final stages of my book, "Let The Tribe Increase" about British anarcho punk. I'm gonna try to raise a couple grand to get back to England for a couple more details and then it's off the AK Press. I hope people have been digging the serialized chapters in MRR. It's taken years. I almost don't want to finish as I don't know what I'll do next.

Anyway...

(I wrote this back when I wanted this issue to come out before Summer. That didn't happen. In the meantime, I was in and out of the hospital. I'll write about that in the next issue. - Lance 7/7/06)



AUSTIN CAN'T READ MILESTONES

I like Austin. But I hate Austin. It's not Texas. But it really is Texas.

I used to really love San Francisco. Especially now that I don't live there, I can say that. But when I lived there, my friends and I would mostly talk about what a crappy place it was. People would visit and say things like, "San Francisco is so cool. You must love it here." The only way I could reply would be with a litany of complaints about how fucked the city was. Let's face it: every city is fucked. Inequity and injustice are integral to the urban experience. You put a few hundred thousand people in one place and you're gonna run into a lot of very stupid and greedy people. I had my complaints. But I loved San Francisco. I just knew it well enough that I felt I could say what I felt. It was like I was so confident in the good parts of the city, I didn't at all feel threatened and even enjoyed ripping the city apart.

At the same time, if you didn't live there, you couldn't say shit. You know the saying "noone gets to beat up my little brother but me". It's that mentality.

In Austin, that sort of love doesn't exist. People here are fucking totally uptight and insecure about scrutiny of their city. It's like they've spent so much time fighting the Texas stereotypes (which, I assure you, are mostly true) that their version of civic pride is this sort of humorless self-defense that doesn't have much leeway. They actually don't want you to mess with Texas...

But I don't give a shit. Fuck Austin. I live here too. I've lived here for years and I don't give a fuck about your psychotic inability to separate a personal attack and one on the great unwashed of Austin.

After some discussion with a few folks here I've decided to make at least one concession: Texans are not inherently stupid. No, they're just ignorant and somewhat illiterate.

I work at a video store in Austin. It's hardly the coolest video store I've ever worked at (and that's a sad reflection on me) but we do have sections for Wong Kar-Wai, Nagisa Oshima, UFOs and Troma. Still, at least once a day and often more, we get people coming up to the counter with a DVD box in hand asking "Duz thiyis haiv soobytyles? I doan wanna have ta read..." Wow. Say that in any other video store that I've ever worked at and we would have mercilessly mocked you until you left the building. The very idea that they would "have" to read, like it's a chore, is crazy. Like their braining is saying "Oh man... words... I hate words." Jesus Christ, go back to the trailer park and put down the DVD box with the pretty colors. "Matt Daymun doan make me read!" I really need to find a job without any human contact...

RIP John Loder

Lately I've been feeling like death is all around. It's got something to do with my Dad's memorial service. It's got something to do with plane's falling out of the sky every couple of weeks. Now John Loder is dead.

I know a lot of people, especially anarchos, had some serious problems with him. He was the biz to a lot of people. But even at his most crass (pun partially intended) he was always decent to me.

I only met him a few times, so here are some of my memories.

The first time I met him, he was visiting the US and just sort of showed up at the Maximum Rock N Roll house. He just crashed on the couch and hung out for a couple of days. He was a really nice and upbeat guy. I couldn't understand why he didn't just get a hotel as he surely could have afforded it. I couldn't understand why he cared about MRR at all.

I met him again when he came with a couple of the Mudhoney guys to the Cringer/Citizen Fish show up in Seattle at the OK Hotel. They were all really nice even when we made fun of SubPop and SubPop bands saying we thought of Subvert, Aspirin Feast and Christ On A Crutch when we thought of the Seattle Sound. He was trying to get Dick to sign us to Bluurgh. He told Dick, "that's a band I can really sell".

I met him once again after that I think in London. If you don't know the man's legacy, I'm sure there are several obituaries easy to find that talk about how important he has been to independent music. John Peel last year. John Loder this year. Who is next?

RIP Piggy

Voivod may be my favorite of the first wave of crossover bands. "War And Pain" is, for me, the best of that generation beating even the first releases of Slayer, Metallica and Celtic Frost. That album (and the amazing demo if you were one of the nerds like me that used to trade metal tapes) is fucking insanity completely avoiding the teutonic structure of most crossover metal. The band really let loose and it came across on record like no other. Around that time, they did a tour out west opening for Celtic Frost in LA around "Morbidity Tales" and fucking blew 'em away. Piggy, like drummer Away and singer Snake, had been with the band since the start and were in the process of recording their 14th LP when he passed of colon cancer. By the time he had been diagnosed, the cancer had spread to his liver and was inoperable. He was 45.

RIP RL Burnside

I don't know why, and I'm not at all implying any sort of mysticism, but for some reason on Tuesday I decided to watch "Deep Blues" at work just to see the RL Burnside footage. I didn't even know he was ill. He passed away on the 1st at St. Francis Hospital in Memphis.

(Originally, I had written this article for Giant Robot. Years back, Liberty and I wrote a guide to Asian restaurants in the Bay Area. After some research I finally felt confident doing the same for Austin. However, GR were in the middle of their "Perfect Day" series and asked me to rework the story into "My Perfect Day" in Austin. Needless to say, I don't just sit around and stuff my fat face. So the article was re-tooled and things were added and cut. Here's the original article in it's natural glory.)

A lot of locals here in the Lone Star capitol get bent out of shape when year after year Austin is voted worst when it comes to food in a major city in the United States. This may be a perception issue as, like the cliché, everything IS bigger in Texas. So when it comes to quality versus quantity, you can imagine how many Texans lean. Add to that the fact that many people think of these polls as being provincial and prejudiced towards the coasts. I'll admit that as a former Californian, I'm still not sold on Tex Mex and miss a real Mission-style burrito from Cancun or El Castillito. Just because you give something an intriguing name like Chile Con Queso doesn't change the fact that it seems like a big bowl of melted Velveeta. Plus, green bell peppers can go to hell, right?

The real problem with Austin cuisine, and I'm sure this has a lot to do with it's low rating, is the diversity. There's world-class bar-b-que and Tex Mex. But if you want really great dim sum or pad thai or even tempura, you are mostly shit out of luck. I'm a vegetarian, so my life is just that much harder. In moving here, I felt it was my "numba one son" duty to the old world to find the best Asian eateries in town. The result is a roadmap of heartburn and headache and a couple of diamonds in the rough.

Shanghai River Restaurant (2700 W. Anderson)
Texas is all about doing things 110%. It's true with sports. It's true with trucks. It's also true with normal eating habits. As a result, I'm living in Buffet City. Before I sound like a total glutton and you stop feeling sorry for me and my heart condition, I wanted to start with Shanghai River's vegan buffet. Yup, Austin is the only part of Texas where you will find vegan anything. It's a marriage of opposite ideas like a Southern Democrat. The food is a heat lamp assortment of fried vegetables, deep fried vegetables and balls of gluten in various sweet sauces. Everyone loves this place. All I know is it's the only place on this list where I got food poisoning.

China Star (6134 E. Hwy 290)
This is the quintessential Chinese buffet in Texas. You've got your Kung Pao's, your General Tso's, your sweet and sour. But to keep everyone happy, you also get fried chicken and ribs. It's a sellout to family diners assuming that every family has at least one person that can't stand Chinese food. If that's true, then let the re-education begin! China Star could lead the all-you-can-eat Cultural Revolution. Char Siu is the Uncle Tom of the bar-b-que world. Denounce their hot wings in favor of the almond chicken!

Buffet Palace (4601 Westgate)
Walking in to the buffet of buffets is like Dorothy entering the Emerald Palace. It's so clean. It's so big. Wow. Beautiful fruit. Beautiful salads. Sushi, Kal Bi, and Chow Mein all living in harmony: it's like the dreams Mao had Peking.

Madras Pavillion (9025 Research #100) and Sarovar Indian Cuisine (8440 Burnett Road #100)

The best result of the collision between Asian culture and buffet culture is the proliferation of Indian buffets. Madras Pavillion and Sarovar are excellent by any standard. They're both all vegetarian and unlike most Asian restaurants here, you can actually find Asians EATING at these places. If I had to pick one over the other, I would go with Madras with their Southern Indian focus. But mostly because they have a big fake black bear wearing a top hat at the front door to greet you. What's that all about?

Mongolian BBQ (117 San Jacinto)

While I know this isn't a creative restaurant name contest, it seems like there's a unique and autonomous "Mongolian BBQ" in every major city. Like most others, it's a tactile experience where you grab your bowl full of tofu and nice veggies and they proceed to cook 'em up on the same grill that just had a fatty piece of pork. If you can hang with that, it's a pretty good meal for under \$10.

Java Noodles (2400 E. Oltorf)

The sole Indonesian restaurant I could find is also one of the best deals in the city. It's not exclusively a buffet, but the weekday lunch special is the best deal in town. My favorite meal there is the Kari Tahu. It's a green curry with tofu and potatoes. The potato starch makes the curry that much thicker. The whole meal comes with the soup buffet which is plenty of food on it's own. Incidentally, I've been eating here for years and only last week did I realize that Kari Tahu Javanese for Curry Tofu. I'm a genius.

Marco Polo (2200 S I-35)

Okay, no more talk of buffets. Well, not much more talk. The food here on the weekdays is just sorta blah. It's okay. Not too exciting. But on the weekends, it's the only place in town that I know of that does dim sum. A small army of wait staff push around little carts. Each cart has different selection of dumplings, buns and puddings and when they get near you, you say yes or no. There's always the one out of shape guy with glasses that's constantly dabbing his forehead with a sweat soaked hanky like he's in some '80s John Hughes comedy.

Wanfu (2400 E. Oltorf)

Add to the Texas food physics equation Quality >< Quantity >< Time. For a so-called major city, everything here fucking closes at an unreasonably early hour. Like disco diva Alicia Bridges, I love the nightlife. So I often find myself eating at Wanfu who have the decency of feeding our alcoholic community by staying open until 4:00 AM. Plus, they were playing the Cure when I was there the other night. Yeah, the food is okay.

New Mandarin (212 E. Oltorf)

No, the food is definitely not that good. But there are two reasons why I keep coming back. First of all, they are the only place in town that makes Chinese donuts and they do it well. If you're from Hawaii, think dwarf Malasadas. The other reason I go back is there seems to be some sort of drama between the two women who run the place. I can't tell if they are sisters or mother and daughter. But the older

one is just friendly enough to cover the Woody Allen-esque stress she seems to be feeling. The younger one seems like she would rather be anywhere else in the world than this restaurant. Like a rave, for example... Bravo, you both!

Umi Sushi (5510 S. I-35 #400)

Oh, Umi – why are you so expensive? I've only eaten there once and wound up spending a small fortune on really good sushi and even better tempura. It's one of those places that look like the owners were watching American Psycho when they designed the interior. It's yuppie neo-fascism; all black and shiny. Eating there made me feel like I was on some sort of diplomatic mission from Alderaan.

Korea Garden (6519 N. Lamar)

I don't know why, but there are like a billion Korean grocery stores in Austin. What's the deal? They're not even all religious fanatics like I had assumed. For so many Korean shops, there really aren't many restaurants. But luckily Korea Garden is awesome. Like Umi, it's easy to spend a week's pay here. But it's worth it for the good bean sprouts and kim chee pancake.

Thai Passion (620 Congress)

It's actually on a side street and I'd never even noticed this place existing in my first few years living here. This place is good. I mean, good like it rivals the places back in California good. The sauces are so tasty, I actually ate dish made up mostly of green beans, my mortal enemy. The appetizers are also very, very good. Nifty little bits of fried tofu with a sweet and spicy dipping sauce. A tasty variety of vegetarian dishes. I've been there several times and it's no fluke: I have found a truly excellent Asian restaurant in Austin!

Madam Mam's (2514 Guadalupe) and Thai Kitchen (3009 Guadalupe)

I used to work on "The Drag" and it really is a drag. The 10-block DMZ of Guadalupe is partly made up of the western border of the University of Texas. So, everything is that hideous orange/brown school color with Longhorns this and Longhorns that. It's gross. But amidst the school coops and Urban Outfitters are a couple of decent Thai places. Madam Mam's specializes in noodles. In fact, the full name is Madam Mam's Noodles and More (what the hell kind of name is that?) The flat Pad Se Ew is pretty tasty as is the Pad Thai at Thai Kitchen. While all the other places on the drag are filled almost exclusively with students (tired, hungry, yearning to be free) Madam Mam's and Thai Kitchen get a lot of faculty for better or for worse.

Hai Ky (1391 E. Oltorf)

This place is so hip, for a second I thought I was there to put highlights in my hair. Like just over half of the restaurants on this list, it's in a strip mall this one with fast food on either side. I can't imagine why anyone would go for the corporate death burger when you can get a bird's nest of crispy egg noodles here for the same price.

Sunflower Restaurant (8557 Research Blvd #146)

A little taste of home, the original Sunflower is back in San Francisco. The first time I ate there, a disgruntled twenty-something was the only wait staff, his parents having forced him to leave the Bay to help get this place going. Sorry,

dude. The food here is really good (best spring rolls and peanut sauce in the city). But I mostly go as part of a shopping trip as Hong Kong Market is on one side and Target is on the other.

Kim Phung (7601 N. Lamar)

Kim Phung is a local fave. It wins every noodle/Asian food award in Austin. It's kind of like a high school cafeteria inside. But there are a lot of choices and the portions are massive. It's actually almost a revolting amount of food and it's oily as all hell. I drank two Diet Cokes to cut the grease.

TOP TEN ASIAN HORROR FLICKS

(I wrote this around Halloween. I did this as well as a bunch of horror movie reviews for Shocktober.)

Here's a new list getting into the season's spirit. This top ten is going to focus on contemporary Asian horror films. I've decided just to list them in alphabetical order as it was really too hard to put one over the other. There are a couple that probably deserve more mention as they were the first and sort of set the standard. But I think it's better just to keep this list alphabetical. I've also combined some of the franchises as one spot so I can talk about more movies.

DARK WATER – Hideo Nakato is making some good movies. He did the first two "Ringu" flicks, "Chaos" and "Dark Water". Why does Hollywood have to ruin horror films from around the world? I guess they've always been doing it. The first one I remember was when the great Danish film "Nightwatch" was remade with Ewan McGregor and Nick Nolte and a dreadful Chemical Brothers soundtrack. Now they've done it to Nakato's films. Just close your eyes and ignore the American version. The original Japanese "Dark Water", or "Honogurai Mizu No Soko Kara" is great and scary as hell. Yoshimi is a young woman in the middle of a horrible divorce from her creepy, older, businessman husband. She's trying to find work, find a place to live and take care of her six-year-old daughter, Ikuko. Among other things, she's constantly running late, leaving Ikuko alone at her school. The apartment they move into is bleak enough only exacerbated by a damp spot in the ceiling above the bed that seems to be coming from the apartment above. From here, the movie gets downright eerie as we soon learn that a girl Ikuko's age, who not only attended her school but lived in the same complex, had disappeared never to be found. Yoshimi keeps finding evidence of the girl's presence as well as what seem to be visions of the girl. The cinematography, the sound, the acting, it's a great film and a classic in the same way that "Ringu" was before it.

EYE, THE – I saw "The Eye 2" AKA "Jian Gui 2", as well and I really can't see what it's got to do with the first. But they're both pretty good in their own ways. In the original film, a blind girl receives a cornea transplant. From the very first moment she opens her eyes, the viewer knows more than she does. At first, her vision is blurred and there are blurry apparitions of people in the background and everywhere she goes. As the viewers, we already know that those people aren't there and she has the ability to see ghosts

and they're everywhere. In addition to these visions, she has nightmare-ish flashbacks to some sort of incident that she can't quite piece together. This becomes the real plot of the film as she, with the help of her young dude therapist, try to unravel the mystery of her visions. In the meantime, there are a lot of great ghostly images that are very, very disturbing. Even when they are totally outside of the plot, there are extras in the background that are clearly meant to represent spirits. It's like a much creepier version of "Sixth Sense". The apparitions are great too. Remember the first time you saw an ad for "The Exorcism of Emily Rose" and you didn't know it sucked and you were psyched by the ghostly images? Imagine a whole movie of that kind of shit! In the sequel, a young woman (played by Shu Qi) is going through a devastating break up. In an over-dramatic attempt to bring attention to herself, she makes a half hearted attempt at committing suicide. While the suicide doesn't take, she does find that she went further into death than expected. The result is that she can now see spirits in everyday life. The story gets much more complicated when she finds out she is pregnant. Her visions are intertwined with the viewer learning more of the back-story of her relationship that went bad. By the end, rather than a twist ending, you have been gradually turned around from your first perception. It's a good flick, well acted, and with more nice looking special effects. The Pang Brothers did both flicks as well as "Ab-Normal Beauty" and "The Eye X" which I haven't seen but I heard is great. Like everything else great in the international movie world, Hollywood with its total lack of ideas are re-making this Hong Kong classic with fucking Renee fucking Zellweger. What the hell is wrong with this country?

JU-ON – Wow, there are five of these flicks and even the first two, shot on video for Japanese TV, kick ass over the US version. Buffy let me down! The first two films, the ones made for TV, are sometimes known as "Ju-On: The Curse 1" and "Ju-On: The Curse 2". But they're really just one long feature. In fact, the first segment of part two is merely a replaying of the last segment of the first. Is that confusing? This is an almost Godard-like non-linear approach to storytelling. The tenses go back and forth and their immediate relations to who is living at this one particular house only define the characters. Let me try to explain. There is a house and it's haunted. It's hard to say what event started it. The story starts with a schoolteacher one of whose pupil hasn't shown up for school in a few days. He decides to go check up on the family. He finds the kid there alone with the house in shambles. The movie then goes on to explain several stories at once only coming together with each ones bloody conclusion at the end of the film. Especially with the first three films (films three and four are often referred to as "Ju-On: The Grudge" and "Ju-On: The Grudge 2") it's almost like a Peter Greenaway film with a meditation on supernatural death. The deaths can range from extremely creepy to sort of funny to totally sickening. What's most unnerving about the film is that it treats every character like a protagonist, so you really don't expect them to get killed. But there is a lot of death and you are constantly being caught off guard. The third film was the first meant for theatrical release, so it's got seriously higher production values. Starting not too far from where the TV version ended, Rika (played by Megumi Okina who was great in "Red Shadow") is a volunteer social worker dispatched to the house of the original

series. She finds an elderly woman in shock and alone. She also finds a young boy there but not the parents. From there the curse continues killing everyone who even tangentially comes in contact with it. One of the best sequences involved Hitomi, daughter of the old woman and sister of the husband living in the house. By just stopping by, she is cursed and the deadly spirit tracks her down in a completely creepy sequence.

The fourth film breaks from this style of overlapping storytelling in favor of an almost traditional type of plot. In this film, a crew from a shock TV show decide to do a story on the haunted house, so they take an actress known for her horror flicks as guest host and spend a day shooting on location. From the moment they leave, the cast and crew start dying off one by one. Like the other films, the story goes back and forth in time, keeping you attentive and also making the shocks unexpected. The ending sequence at the hospital is totally fucked!

A fifth Japanese film in the series is now out in Japan. I can't wait.

MEMORIES OF MURDER – What I like about this new crop of Asian horror flicks is that they don't give a shit about the western market. They don't try to appeal to the lowest common denominator. They make movies that are real and do it almost going out of their way to include motifs and myths of their culture and history. "Memories of Murder" or "Salinui Chueok" is a true story about the first serial killer ever documented in South Korea. The film starts out like it's gonna be a buddy-cop farce. It's the country bumpkin detective dealing with the more sophisticated city guy brought in on the case. It's amazing how quickly this film shifts gears. Even as they are trying to secure a pretty gruesome crime scene, there are a few sight gags that had me laughing out loud. Even the destruction of evidence by some unwitting farmer is played for laughs. At the same time, there is the real story. The killer raped and murdered 10 women and was never caught (this is not a spoiler as it's the first thing you read at the start of the film). Some of the crime scenes are sickening as they accurately show the decay depending on how long it took the police to find them. Aficionados will know director Bong Joon-Ho from his anxiety ridden thriller "Phantom: The Submarine" and in this film he certainly can switch into that mode when he needs to. A lot of this film is also quite beautiful. It's nice to see the often-maligned South Korean country with its fields and small town life. Even the subject of police brutality, which is pretty common, is over-compensated for with more comedy.

NIGHTMARE – Another great one from South Korea, AKA "Gawi", this one is more common to current Japanese horror cinema. The film starts at the morgue with the body of Kyung-Ah, a college girl who committed suicide. We get to see the mortician sew her eyes shut which both sets the tone as well as partly explains the plot of the film as seconds later, the eyelids pop back open and refuse to close. Several years later Sun-Ae has run away from a mental institution to find her old college friend, Lee Hye-Jin. She is terrified that she has seen Kyung-Ah. It turns out that all three were part of a small secret university group called A Few Good Men. Each member of the group has suffered some sort of major disappointment or failure in their subsequent lives. Suddenly they start dying off one by one and

Hye-Jin needs to revisit the night of the suicide to find out just what happened. The result is a complex back-story that is perfectly told with sudden flashbacks that help blur reality. The effects are pretty good; especially the opening scene of an eye being sewn shut, and the story is complex and smarter than your usual one dimensional story with a predictable twist at the end.

ONE MISSED CALL – I'm not one of those people that go crazy for Takashi Miike. I think he's cool and I loved "Audition" and "Visitor Q". But of my two favorites of his, one is a TV show that I'll get to later and the other is this. First things first, I like the idea that cell phones can kill you. I like the idea that just having one means you can die from a weird curse. What a great premise! If they would only make a movie where a supernatural force kills people that don't clean up their dog's shit... The film starts with some friends out for dinner. While in the bathroom, one of the girls misses a call. When she checks her messages, it seems to be her voice leaving a cryptic message and then screaming. The more mysterious, the return number is her own phone and the call is dated two days in the future. You can imagine where this is heading and the first kill of the movie is fantastic. It's sudden, mostly unexpected and looks amazing. As all the friends from that first dinner shared phone numbers, they all start having the same thing happen to them, phone message from the future and death. Each way is more complicated and surprising than before. In Miike's own way, the death's can even be sort of funny in a really dark way.

RING, THE – "The Ring" or "Ringu" is really the film that got the whole craze in the States for Asian horror. Then there was the half-assed Hollywood version with the poorman's Nicole Kidman, Naomi Watts, which everyone thought was so great because they don't know what the hell they're talking about and are too obsessed with MTV style editing and pacing to deal with shit like subtitles. What the hell is Gore Verbinski's problem? His version of "The Ring" looks like a fucking Subaru ad. Anyway, you know the story. There's bootleg tape floating around. If you see it, you get a phone call telling you you're gonna die. No matter where you are, guess what, you die. It's a great idea especially when you consider how many bootleg versions of this movie there are out there. Reiko is a reporter who gets involved in the curse through her niece who died after seeing the tape. The story is more complex as her personal life is confused raising her son, Yoichi and dealing with an accommodating ex-husband, Ryuji. "Ringu" is methodically paced, very well acted (as opposed to the totally obtuse performances in the honky version) and really fucking creepy. It's really the only one you need to see including all remakes and sequels. I did just see most of them, so I thought I'd run them down for you just so you have some idea what they're about while you look blankly at the photo-copied bootleg version in your local video store...

"Ringu 2" is a lot less frightening as you already know the punch line, but is a fascinating look at the extended relations to the first story. I think this is a lot of why American audiences didn't get into it as much. The second volume is only tangentially related to the original as seems to be common with Asian horror. The film follows Mai Takano, the graduate student only briefly in the first film. She tries to track down Reiko and Yoichi to try to get to the bottom of

what happened to her professor, Ryuji. She goes by Reiko's old work and winds up meeting another reporter who is trying to do a story on the tape. There are some scares along the way especially when visiting a survivor from the first film in a mental institution. But from there the film fails by trying to hard to scientifically explain the phenomenon. It's fun in a bullshit sort of way.

The real sequel is "Rasen" or "Spiral". Made virtually at the same time as the original, it's totally incompatible with "Ringu 2"! Starting with Ryuji's autopsy, it turns out that the tape is somehow linked to a virus that is suffocating people everywhere. Take the supernatural element from "Ringu" and you've got more of a convoluted, vaguely sci-fi thriller that pretty much leaves you wanting scary, wet ghosts with Manson Girl hair in their faces.

"Ringu: Saishuu Sho" was "Ringu" stretched out into a 12-part TV series in '99, a year after the original hit theaters. This one is clearly made for TV and it really is 12 hours long. It's hard to say if it's horror at all. It's more like a pretty well done soap opera with a suspenseful edge. It's not brilliant. But if you can get into the characters and are fairly obsessed with the original flick, it's addictive.

The last Japanese flick in the series was 2000's "Ringu 0: Basudei". This prequel the whole back-story of Sadako and you view her as a sympathetic character, a misunderstood teen trying to get by in a competitive Tokyo dance company. But after her arrival, the student's begin having nightmares followed by unsolved murders. While not strictly a horror film except for it's relationship to the franchise, this film still works as a drama with some very scary supernatural moments.

Not as good as the original, but better than the whitey version, South Korea's "Ring Virus" is a pretty good adaptation of the story. The film isn't just "Ringu" with Korean names. There is a strange quasi-sexual angle to the whole affair with Eun-Suh (this versions Sadako) condemned ultimately out of refusal of some sort of lascivious liaison. Oh, there's a hermaphrodite too. Also, the psychic angle is heightened in this version. It's still moody as hell and has atmosphere to spare. The soundtrack is minimal which is great as the space helps balance the complicated story.

TENNEN SHOJO MAN NEXT – Unfucking believable! What would Takashi Miike do if asked to make a vampire movie? This is your answer. An evil modeling agency is collecting teen female virgins. The agency is lead by a group of gay teen boys who only use the girls as sources of blood. Why? They're all fucking vampires! No shit, an army of teen, supermodel vampires lead by a council of gay, hot boy vampires. Who could possibly stop them? Man Koda and her army of super-powered schoolgirl fighters known as the N-Girls. This made for TV movie is fucking unbelievable. One of the best moments is when these two dudes harass one of the schoolgirls. They are clearly Americans and they're scamming on Asian teens. The girl tries to ignore them and eventually kicks the crap out of them. It's fucking beautiful. I think that scene is the reason why this film gets rated so low by American fans of the genre that are basically exercising their Asian-fetish in a non-porn way with these films. Seriously, best Miike ever!!!

THREE – There have been a couple of these now with

"Three" being the first and "Three... Extremes" being the more recent. I really like this idea of getting three different directors to each make a short horror film and stick them together for release as a feature. It's like "Two Evil Eyes" or even "Creepshow" or something.

The first one is probably my favorite even though it's a much lower profile film. The first segment comes from Kim Ji-Woon from South Korea. He's known mostly for the fantastic "Tale of Two Sisters" which would be on this list if it were a Top Eleven and "The Quiet Family". His portion is called "Memories" which is a creepy story about a guy whose wife has left him. In his delirium, he begins having visions making him believe something horrible has happened to her. The second story is "The Wheel" by Nonzee Nimibutr from Thailand. While this may be the simplest story, a small village is cursed with only a young boy who can reverse it, it ends up being the most interesting with its completely different approach to horror. The film is edited almost psychedelically with interesting shot selections and vivid colors and images uniquely Thai. The final chapter is "Going Home" from Peter Chan who is actually mostly known for his romantic farce "He's The Woman, She's The Man" a great film of a very different variety. In this story, a man and his son move into an almost entirely abandoned building. It's a massive complex with every few residents. In the style of "Dark Water", the boy begins to see visions of a little girl his age. The story takes a completely bizarre twist from there that would be really wrong for me to give away.

The second film in this franchise is "Three... Extremes". The first segment is Takashi Miike's "The Box". A psychological mystery, a woman is haunted by the memory of her sister's death. When they were both children, she locked her sister in a box, who was burned to death when a fire broke out. The second segment is by Fruit Chan who I think had one of the best movies of 2002 with "Public Toilet". In "Dumplings", an aging actress lets vanity get the best of her as she travels from Hong Kong to the mainland in search of a woman who makes bao that have a magical de-aging affect. The question is, what exactly does she use for the meat? Shot by Christopher Doyle famous for his work with Wong Kar-Wai, this amazing short is also available separately as a feature on it's own. The last segment is by the amazing Chan-Wook Park who made the incredible "Old Boy". A famous director is knocked out and held prisoner, along with his wife, in their home. The kidnapper is a former extra on a couple of his films. Jealous of the director's success, he begins cutting off the wife's fingers in order to get some demands met. Yeah, it's a lot more gruesome than the first collection. I wonder what they'll do for the next?

WHISPERING CORRIDORS – South Korea's Yeogo Goedam series may not have nearly the Western recognition of "Ju-on" or "Ringu", but it's one of the first and best with the original coming out in 1998. The entire series takes place at a girl's high school; involving various secular events so painful they create a supernatural response that haunts.

In the first film, a teacher, Mrs. Park, is found hanging from a bridge. Everyone assumes that it was a suicide. But the viewer knows that some unseen force is what killed her. She is replaced by a young, beautiful (which, if it wasn't obvious already, the dialog reminds you) alumni, Miss Hur, who herself has some sour memories of the school. At the same time, there are two student relationships that the film

follows. The first is Lim Ji-Oh and Yoon Jae-Yi. Ji-Oh is an artist and is somewhat outgoing while Jae-Yi is a quiet introvert. The two are brought together when they both show up early for school and discover Mrs. Park's hanging body. The other two are class competitors, Park So-Young and Kim Jung-Sook. The two used to be best friends but have drifted apart with So-Young become head of the class and Jung-Sook the brooding outsider. Mrs. Park, as it turns out, is only the first to die in this school as Mrs. Hur tries to find the answer while untangling her own past connection to the school. The story is often more sentimental and sad than actually frightening which is actually a relief. It keeps you from thinking that this is just another run of the mill horror flick and it also leaves you unprepared for when something really scary does happen.

The second flick, "Whispering Corridors 2: Memento Mori" doesn't revive any of the original characters. But it does follow a very similar structure. In this story, we follow two different stories again. The first is that of a young girl, Min-Ah in school who discovers a diary written by two girls together. The book tells the story of their growing romance and Min-Ah is slowly engrossed by it to the point where she hides it from her friends, as she seems slightly embarrassed by her excitement. She soon figures out that the book is written by Shi-Eun and Hyo-Shin, two older girls at the school. Shi-Eun is a popular athlete and Hyo-Shin is something of an outcast. Hyo-Shin kills herself at the school throwing the place into chaos. Feeling like she's somehow connected to the event, Min-Ah starts to find out more and more about the complexity of Shi-Eun and Hyo-Shin's relationship and what might have been a suicide pact. This is actually my favorite of the three films. I think western fans of Asian horror largely ignore them as they go well beyond the scope of horror. In hindsight, this film is as much of a love story as it is anything else and that element is what makes it so excellent and engrossing. It's actually quite sweet and genuinely romantic at times.

"Whispering Corridors 3: Wishing Stairs" is actually the first in the series that I saw a few years ago. The story follows two girls; rich kid So-Hie who is sort of a pain in the ass with her set life and carefree existence. The other is Ji-Seong who lives in the dorms and is constantly filled with anxieties about the future. Both of them are in competition for some sort of ballet scholarship that would get them out of the school. For Ji-Seong, it's her only chance for a better future. This leads her to the film's title. On the totally haunted school campus (aren't they all?) is a creepy set of stairs that leads to a creepy tree where a girl had hung herself years ago. The stairs have 28 steps, but if you walk up them and count 29, you can make a wish and it will come true. That's pretty much what Ji-Seong does, her wish resulting in the death of So-Hie. Like it's predecessors, you can't watch this film expecting some sort of slasher flick. It's a real movie and there's more to the characters than just a bunch of set-ups for dismemberment. Song Ji-Hyo, who stars as Ji-Seong, gives a great stoic performance and has a lot to do with why this third installment is so fascinating despite the weakest script of the three.

A fourth film in this series came out this summer and I can't wait to see it!



WHITE GIRL

She's blonde

**She came along the sidewalk
Leave a trail of blue and black**

Up to you fighting back

Steel chains

A noose or charms on our necks

I find nothing when we talk and sit

Blue heart passion and watch the set

Easy to fall

Part of your skull

Starts to break away

A cheaters walk

Down the block

Behind the evil street

She's a white girl

I'm living with a white girl

Nineteen

Missing her man for an old girl

Drain every beer left over at home

Listen to ghosts in the other room

Why not

You're alone inside his keeping

I'll replace your drunk old man

Sit in the parking lot and hold your hand

Easy to fall

Part of your skull

Starts to break away

Drugged and in love

Out at a club

Pulling me outside

She's a white girl

I'm living with a white girl

THE FESTIVUS TOUR

DIARY 2004

OCTOBER 28th — New Orleans

As much as I like the idea of the Fest, this little mini-tour is a pain in my ass. I've got so much shit to do at home with work and the book, I'm really having a hard time getting into the swing of this tour. With a big tour in the not too distant past and a major one not long enough in the future, a long weekend in Gainesville is a bit of a bummer.

We've had mostly good luck in New Orleans. We've had awesome weird shows in funky theaters and crazy big ones with Propagandhi and Avail. This time, it's a more typical little punk space. Up on the second floor, there's a vocal PA, a kitchen and various carved out spaces the locals call bedrooms. It's cool. These kinds of places can be really welcoming.

We're playing with our San Diego buddies Vena Cava who are also heading to the Fest. They're a good band, but I also really like their approach to the whole band process. There aren't enough groups out there willing to do the shitty leg work. These folks will go anywhere. You know, I think I first met April forever ago when I was in Cringer. We were pals with the Dissent guys and I think she was in that group for a while. She's hella cool.

It's hot and it's muggy. We escape the punks and relax at Tom and Staci's spacious digs. I think I actually relax now.

OCTOBER 29th — Gainesville

Why is it so, so very hot? I find that I'm spending all of my time walking up and down the little area between the clubs. I don't really know that many people here. I know a lot of people vaguely. I'm on the wagon at the moment, so it's all a little weird. It's kind of like being back at "Holidays In The Sun" in Morecambe. This seemingly normal town has been taken over by the punks. It's funny to observe.

Went to the vegan hooters for our free meal. The place is actually sort of like an indie Sabarro's, except there are a bunch of tattoo-mania girls working here. Everyone local seems to dig this place and the pizza is pretty good. We run into the cats from Mates of State, who are now with child. I got a copy of their movie. I love, love that band. I can't wait to see them tonight.

I hit the baseball card shop and get a few Red Sox I needed. Really cheap Luis Tiant. I've got all the Bill Lee's I need. But I still love stumbling across one of his cards. If it's cheap enough, I'll buy it anyway just 'cos.



The fact that the sound guy was kind of a dick to us only helps.

Shit, it was a lot of fun. It was a great time. David almost did get into a fight. Someone threw a towel up onstage and he freaked out. It was sort of a hilarious and anxious over-reaction to the kind of thing that happens at shows all the time. Crazy, crazy, crazy.

We're crashing at Var's place tonight and tomorrow. His animals are sort of freaking me out. I'm afraid of most things on four feet.

OCTOBER 30th — Gainesville

I am feeling a little less than human. Only got a couple of hours of sleep. It's alright. Days like today are meant to be fucked and surreal.

Walking and walking and walking. I got up early with Var and Jennifer. I don't know why I wanted to get there so early. I just thought I could find somewhere to vanish before the crowds descended. But there are already people meandering around. I guess there's some country thing going on during the day. I dunno.

I mostly stayed at the old Covered Dish today, as it's nice and air-conditioned. I can't really take the heat today. I got to see Fifth Hour Hero and True North who were both great as usual. I even bumped into Aaron Elliot. I didn't even

know he was drumming for This Bike Is A Pipe Bomb. We were both a little relieved to see each other. It's weird being surrounded by 10,000 people none of whom you can talk to. We did some catching up and then I got to see him play. It's funny, I've probably seen him drum in half a dozen different bands. For a guy who has a very, very unique style, he can really fit in playing with anyone.



Went back to Var's for sleep. I'm dead to the world. Fifth Hour Hero are also staying the night. I'd really like to stay up and chat. But everyone is way too tired.

me to keep in touch with anyone from the road. It's complicated and I'm horrible at keeping little pieces of paper with numbers and names on them...

OCTOBER 31st — Athens
I like Halloween shows. If I had my way, we would play every Halloween. But it never, ever works out. In 1984, I had one of my best nights seeing REM play Hawaii on Halloween. Bands should go out of their way to play that night. I guess it seems only appropriate that my first time in Athens would be on this day.



I'm gonna add Shreveport to the list of towns that I hope we go back to and one day conquer. Now it's time to load up and drive home. No fun. Long overnight drive back to the city. Liberty is in China. No point in going home after all...

Transmetropolitan is a nice place. We had a great meal at the restaurant downstairs and the upstairs room where the bands play reminded me a lot of a pub gig in England. No were a great thrash duo and Carrie Nations were as catchy as their great records. We were sloptastic as the sound was sorta rough in the room. But there were a lot of people and it was fun.

There's something weird about coming home from tour. I don't know what it is. I always feel like shit. There's something just so totally awful about it. If you

know someone in a band then you know one of two sides. There are the egomaniacs that can't shut up about themselves and are sure the world is their for their pleasure. Then there's most of the rest of us. You leave and you are

Did a little walking around between the bands. Not much going on tonight in this little town. I wish we had time to do more exploring during the day. We never really get to see anywhere...



constantly fighting the urge to count backwards. Once you start doing that, and by that I mean counting the days until you're home, you are cooked. Besides, getting home is never what you want. Being on tour is sort of like dying. The longer the doctors don't feel a pulse, the less you'll have if and when they revive you. That's tour. You get in a van and are put in an unnatural though exhilarating situation for a month. You get back sort of expecting everything to be the same as when you left. But in it's own way, life goes

NOVEMBER 1st — Shreveport

We did a radio show here. It was another night where the noise was actually becoming noise and the crappy sound was making it more and more likely that this set would turn into a feedback improv. The

live room at KLRU is pretty small and you can't really get that many people in there anyway. It was fun. I got a bunch of free post cards that I'll find some use for later. I could've lived without loading up the stairs in the rain...

on. Even when people tell you "you didn't miss much" you still missed everything. It's impossible not to feel like you are slightly out of touch with everything. Getting home to an empty house just makes me feel that much crazier.

The guy that set the show up was really great. We went back to his place and had some great food. He's one of those guys that I really wish I had kept in touch with. It's so hard for

Still, I love it and would probably actually tour even more if given the chance. Bring it on...

Antisect were part of the second generation of anarcho bands and one of the most famous in what was becoming the more aggressive hardcore sound. With Discharge and Motorhead taking point, bands like Antisect, though limited in documentation, forged a sound that's now the basis of two decades of international hardcore.

Lance - How did you first get into punk rock?

John - I heard a demo of "New Rose" by the Damned on John Peel's radio show in 1976 and that was that. A frantic and desperate scramble to get hold of as much similar music as possible followed and soon I was listening to, and going to see such bands as,

The Damned, Pistols, 999, The Drones, Lurkers, The Boys,

Ramones, etc. My long hair got cut and dyed, my trousers got narrow and my attitude became questionable but suitable to a 15-year-old boy. (Prior to this I had been listening to such bands as Hawkwind and Black Sabbath, and incidentally I still do).

Lance - What made you decide you wanted to play music?

John - I had been playing classical guitar since the age of 9, and bass guitar since 13. I had always loved music since T REX in the early 70s and it has never left me.

Lance - Had you been in any bands before Antisect?

John - Yeah. Loads. Immediately prior to joining Antisect I belonged to a punk 2 piece called Face Ache which enjoyed much local notoriety in Northampton UK. (The name of the drummer in that band was Phil Collins!! Not 'the Phil Collins of course, but Phil Collins never the less).

Lance - How did the band form? How did you folks all meet? How did you find so many Petes!?!?

John - Most of the boys new each other from school in Daventry UK. The Pete thing was always a pain to me. Pete Lyons was known as Lippy, Pete Polluscavitzc was known as Polly, and Pete Boyce as Boycie. All of a sudden they all decided that they wanted to be called Pete! Thank God I was (and still am) called John!

Lance - Was there ever a time when you were more of a straightforward punk band?

John - If by more straightforward you mean more punky musically and with less of the morality trip, yes. Lippy and Polly (Maybe Boycie too, not sure) were in a band called Xylum, much in the Discharge vein, and I had Face Ache as I said before. My very first punk band was called Dross back in 77 and that was about as 'straightforward' as you can get.

Lance - What were some of the ideas you were trying to get across musically when you first started the band?

John - Lippy was always very much the man behind Antisect from a musical point of view. He became interested in a lot of more complex and 'progressive' or 'metal' type rock quite early on and this very much influenced the sound. Lippy, Polly and I, were very much going for a heavier than thou

sound, drawing on influences such as early Metallica, Slayer etc. I am still interested in finding the heaviest riff in the world. My all time favourite riff, and one which can clearly be heard influencing later Antisect, is from 'Symptoms of the Universe' by Black Sabbath. I still think its right up there with the heaviest 25 plus years on.

Lance - Who were some of your influences in the beginning? There really wasn't anything like Antisect at the time.

John - Discharge really. Discharge and Antisect both started going down a more metal route musically kind of simulta-

neously.

Antisect was partly born out of Lippy's connections with Discharge as I understand. Xylum certainly supported them, as did Antisect early

ANTISECT



on.

Lance - Did you feel you were making a conscious effort to get away from the traditional punk style?

John - Lippy may have done but I don't really know. Lippy is a perfectionist. If he is not happy with something he would rather ditch it than make do. I have never had a problem with a 'traditional punk style' but then so many other bands were, and are, doing that perfectly well so why duplicate?

Lance - To what extent was industrial music an influence on your music?

John - A lot to me but less to Lippy who as I have said really 'was' Antisect musically in my opinion. I loved Test Dept and the like

very early on, before the word 'Industrial' was coined. I still like the genre but I'm often put off by the slightly ludicrous personas put across with the music.

Lance - What were some of the non-punk influences?

John - Well, you've had some of mine. Also I have always loved, Motorhead, Zeppelin etc. Lippy's record collection was always very varied but we both liked Hawkwind, and Bob Calvert's solo stuff.

Lance - How did you find out about Crass and Flux and the anarcho scene?

John - Again, I can only speak for me. Found Flux through hearing 'Tube Disasters' on John Peel's radio show. Actually not that keen on Flux myself. I found it rather contrived both musically and lyrically, however, I am sure they were sincere in their ideas.

Lippy and co met Crass through other bands I think.

I always loved the Crass message (less so now actually), but musically it never did it for me really.

Lance - What was it that drew you to it?

John - The sheer genuine subversiveness of it all. The courage to attack the very pillars of society with intelligence and creativity. It felt dangerous and real.

Lance - Had you been at all familiar with anarcho politics at that time?

John - Prior to meeting Lippy I had been very aware but hadn't really bought into the whole thing. Long nights of discussion with Antisect members slowly pulled me in that

direction.

Lance - What bands were you playing with in the early days?

John - As I said before, Discharge plus GBH and stuff.

Lance - How did you get to know Flux?

John - I met them through Antisept, don't know how they met them but I would guess through gigging.

Lance - How was it decided that you would do your first album for Spiderleg?

John - Don't think anyone else had offered.

Lance - Did the band record any demo tapes before hand?

John - Loads, and I have none of them.

Lance - Had you known any of the other bands on the label like Subhumans, Amebix, etc?

John - The boys knew them all; I met most but never really got to know them. We had a bit of a fallout with Subhumans which nearly came to blows at a festival in Portsmouth UK. Hilariious! I shan't go into the gory details. Myself, I love the Subhumans and Amebix. Last I heard of Rob from Amebix he was a member of a patch wearing motorbike club.

Lance - Was there ever a concern that Antisept would be subject to the same police scrutinizing as Flux were? Was there any such harassment?

John - Too much to detail, but mainly this came from Lippy and associated activities in connection with the Animal Liberation Front rather than anything specific to Antisept. Our house in Northampton UK was frequently visited by the Police and Lippy often joined them at their place!

Lance - To what extent were band members involved with political activities?

John - See above. I was always too lazy. Most of the rest of the band were pretty active.

Lance - How involved were you with the production work on the record?

John - I know Lippy was very involved at an executive level. Lippy is now a producer and engineer so that's his thing now.

Lance - The record has an especially gloomy overtone. Was there a certain atmosphere you were trying to describe with that recording?

John - Yes. The torture and murder of animals for financial gain is pretty fucking gloomy don't you think?

Lance - The lyrics are also especially descriptive and metaphoric. Were you especially trying to write imagistic lyrics? What were some of your lyrical inspirations?

John - You really need to speak to Lippy!!! Lippy, if you're reading this, phone the man!!

Lance - What are some of your favourite lyrics from that record? Which ones do you feel best summed up what you were trying to communicate?

John - Can't say, but I'll tell you a secret between you and I. On the first UK tour as a 3 piece (Lippy, Polly and I), we hadn't learned the words because Boycie had left the band suddenly for personal reasons and he was the singer then! We tried to learn the lyrics in the back of the van on the way to our first gig in Leeds but it was hopeless. (Even Lippy who wrote most of them couldn't memorise them!) We then proceeded to play live singing names from England's 1966

World Cup Soccer squad to the Antisept tunes. No one noticed!!

Lance - Considering much of the anarcho scene was about having a positive message against the doom and gloom of the nuclear generation, do you feel that the record encapsulated that or do you feel that it was more focused on the immediate landscape of Thatcher's Britain?

John - Probably. Don't think many young people would relate to it now. Not sure I do either anymore. It was of its time.

Lance - How satisfied with the record were you at the time? When it was done had you any idea of the kind of achievement it was?

John - Lippy was never 100% happy with it, but I always thought it was great. Yes one expected the success I do know that.

Lance - What were some of the ideas you were trying to get across with the cover art? Who was Fish?

John - I think the artwork speaks for itself actually. What ever it means to you, that's what it means. Fish was a guy we knew from Nottingham in UK. (Had a girlfriend called Cat comically).

Lance - How did people respond to the record upon release? How was it received critically?

John - Got mixed reception but lots of people in the music business loved it. The fans were very chuffed.

Lance - Was there a noticeable change in the atmosphere at gigs?

John - The gigs did get busier after the release of In Darkness. Some people never really take a band seriously until they have product even in the punk world. Funny really.

Lance - Did you tour much to support the record?

John - We toured UK, Italy, Holland, Belgium etc. Great days, hundreds of funny stories, lots of fun.

Lance - What was it like on the road with Antisept?

John - Different at the different eras of the band. In the 'In Darkness' days it was all a bit politically aware and serious for me. A bit bloody miserable actually. Things jollied up a lot later on and the later tours were a hoot. Tours with Dirt were always brilliant fun with lost of practical joking and banter between bands.

Lance - Who were some of the bands you toured with?

John - Dirt, Crucifix, Flux, Amebix, and loads of others but it was a long time ago and my brain isn't good in recalling lots of what went on in those days!

Lance - At what point did Wink leave the band? What were the reasons for his departure?

John - He left in 83/84 and I was his replacement. I am not sure of the ins and outs but I think he just wasn't really enjoying it anymore. It is very sad that Wink took his life and what little I know of him I liked very much. He always appeared 100% genuine to me, and a real thinker. Perhaps that was part of the problem. Good man.

Lance - How did you know Tom Lowe?

John - Who is he?

Lance - When and why did Tom Lowe split the group?

John - Who the fuck is Tom Lowe? Only Lippy could have decided when Antisept split and no one else. Again, who



the fuck is Tom Lowe?

Lance - Was John Bryson the final bass player? How did you know him?

John - When I left in 86, a guy called Lawrence took over for the last year or so. He was good. Lippy and I became friends through the small network of local punks in Northampton UK. We very much clicked straight away and were close friends for a long time. I think most of the band were a bit worried when I first came along because I was not a 'long haired veggie punk' like them, but it worked out well in the end.

Lance - How soon after the LP did you record "Out From The Void"?

John - We recorded Void in 85/86. We were never happy with it and still aren't. We simply didn't have the budget or the expertise to get the sound we wanted. Also there were some cracks in the band starting to appear even as we laid down the tracks.

Lance - Were those songs from the original set that the LP tracks were from?

John - Yes, they were new to the line up that was Lippy, Polly and I. We were a seriously tight and heavy 3 piece. Those tracks sounded so much better live than on vinyl.

Lance - Who was Endangered Musik? How did you get hooked up with them?

John - A one-man band from Oxford. The only company who approached us to do a record! Fair play to him!

Lance - What was it like recording that EP?

John - Not that great. We actually recorded the whole thing twice in 2 different studios, as the first attempt was so poor! We were kind of having 'too much of a good time' if you know what I mean as well. The final version was recorded in one day in a tiny studio in East London.

Lance - How was it received?

John - Very well. Got to number 7 in the UK Indie chart. The fans loved it.

Lance - Who was Paul Garner?

John - A friend of mine from Art college, which incidentally I dropped out of. Paul is a very talented artist who now works a lot in the film industry doing set and creature designs and story boards. He's worked on some very famous films including "Hellraiser".

Lance - What made you decide to add more vocalists?

John - Ask Lippy. By the time I joined, we were shedding them!!

Lance - How did you know Caroline Wallis? How much work did she do with the group?

John - Caroline was Rich Hill's partner and a friend of mine from college too. She was a fully participative member of the band.

Lance - What made you decide to do a live record next?

John - We didn't, someone else released it and we knew nothing about it till someone gave us a copy. Good though.

Lance - What label was the live record on?

John - Don't know.

Lance - Did you feel like you were much more of a live band then a studio band?

John - Live, definitely live. As the years passed it got better and better musically. What a shame so little in the way of recordings survive!

Lance - What were some of your favorite live gigs and cities at the time of your constant touring?

John - Italy in '84 has to be at the top of the list for me. Based

in Milan with the coolest people I have ever met. (Chris from Crucifix turned up out of the blue while we were there too!) Lippy and I kept getting arrested though!!

Lance - With so much time on the road, how did you make time to write new material?

John - With great difficulty, why do you think there is so little of it?

Lance - When exactly did the band decide to split up? 1985?

John - I left around 86. The band continued until around 87/88 when all the gear was nicked out of the van one day and that was pretty well that.

Lance - What were some of the reasons for the split?

John - Skint (having no cash, UK slang), bored, tired, no gear and ask Lippy!

Lance - Did any of you go on to play music with other people after the split?

John - Lippy had a cracking good band for while but I can't remember what they were called.

I was in a band called Splitpigs from 89 to 94. We played and toured with the likes of Creamin' Jesus, Wildhearts and others. Great band actually.

Lance - Do you still see any of the ex-members?

John - Not really. I only found Boycie through the website! I was in touch with Lippy up until quite recently but things have drifted. I know he is a producer and engineer with his own studio. I still get emails from Caroline who lives in Cornwall.

Lance - How do you reflect back on the band and the music now?

John - Fondly, but as I said, it was of its time.

Lance - How do you reflect back on the anarcho scene?

John - A bit cynically actually but I don't really want to go into it. I have strong beliefs and so do all of the band members but I still feel let down by many characters on the scene back then. Integrity and honesty is all, I'll say no more.

Lance - Do you feel it had a tangible effect on society or the music industry?

John - Oh yes. Look at Napalm Death and the bands that followed them. All started with us I'm afraid. ND took it to another level like we took Discharge influences to another level. So much black metal and associated genres remind me of what we were doing back in the mid eighties.

Lance - What are some of your fondest memories from back then?

John - Camaraderie and fun. The stories are numerous and outrageous and when I have more time perhaps I'll start to write some of them down. If I do I'll send you a copy.

Lance - How did the '91 live record come to be?

John - I know nothing about it other than that I would like a copy!!

Lance - Who put that out?

John - Don't know, but will they send me one please? Contact me by email splitpig@hotmail.com

Finally, I have to say that I was only with the band for 3 years and so much happened before and after me. Lippy was the constant throughout, indeed, in many ways it was his band. Maybe some of them will see this and send their thoughts. (I will forward to Caroline anyway).

Thank you for still taking an interest in Antisect after all this time. The people who loved the music were what mattered and if they are still there, great.

BMX Bandits are one of the bands that I was sort of thinking of when I started doing this zine. Douglas T. Stewart has headed the group for more than a couple of decades now and they're still churning out beautiful pop music that's smart and somehow outside of the trappings of commercial pop, even commercial indie pop. There is something instinctive about it that you either immediately recognize on first hearing (like when you first hear the Pastels, Talulah Gosh or the Flatmates) or you don't get at all. I've been lucky enough to be totally mesmerized by them for years. I was sort of star-struck when Douglas wrote back and even more amazed that he

was willing to do an interview!

Lance - What

made you want to start a band? Did you always know you wanted to play music?

Douglas - Well I started writing little songs when I was 7 or 8 and I'd sing them at school to other kids at playtime or I'd be sent around classes by teacher to sing them, do little shows I'd written and some impersonations. I tried to learn to play guitar properly for around 5 years but was so bad I eventually gave in. Now I've forgotten everything I learned and I think it's good. When I write a song I'm not limited by what I can do or not at an instrument. I can write something with a backing track that I can hear playing in my head as I sing and I can take the melody any where I want it to go. Then I'm really lucky that I've had great people like David, Francis, Norman, Joe and others who are skilled enough to actually play what I heard and because they are great musicians they add extra magic beyond what I could hear.

I started my first proper band because I liked Frances McKee, who went on to be half of The Vaselines, said she wanted to be in a band. So I started a group called The Pretty Flowers in 1982. I was always excited about the idea of making music.

Lance - Is it more important for you to make music you love or to make music other people will love?

Douglas - To make music I love is most important. I don't love everything we've done. Sometimes we've really failed to capture what we set out to do or we just had a substandard song but some things I've really loved. When other people like it too that is such a wonderful feeling but I have to believe in it first or it would be like lying to everyone and to me too. For me music is too precious to not be honest about.

Lance - Do you think writing great pop songs is a skill you work at and constantly can improve on or is it just random chance that you happen to get a hook or riff in your head?

Douglas - I think it is a combination of skill and something more random, something more unquantifiable. I think some people are just by instinct good at certain things like football or telling stories or painting or fixing stuff or creating melodies. I think I have always had some sort of instinctive gift for simple melodies but listening to lots of great records obsessively helps you learn stuff. Sometimes I can get totally caught up in something like a Burt Bacharach song and listen to it over and over on repeat maybe for 5 or 7 hours listening to every note, every combination of sounds, every beat and just absorbing it. I think because I am basi-

cally a primitive and I can't study compositions in a formal way writing down the dots, etc. I'm a bit like a new born baby or a big sponge just soaking everything in and processing it in my confused primitive brain.

Lance - What is your normal process for writing and arranging a song?

Douglas - Well there have been several ways. Previously in BMX Bandits I would quite often work with someone like Norman or Francis and sometimes we would write both words and music together, sometimes I'd put words to their tune and sometimes I'd write alone. Recently I've been writ-

ing alone and very often that involves me

BMX BANDITS

starting to just sing my life and I can hear a band playing along in my head. So after that happens I'll go to someone like David and sing it to him and say at this point the drums are doing this and the keyboard is doing this and the piano should change from Laura Nyro type piano to Todd Rundgren piano here and then this next bit is like the snow is falling like big soft snow flakes and I'm walking home alone. A lot of the melodies and musical ideas I think of come from visual things. And although lyrics are very important I think it is melody that really makes the emotional connection with people. It has the power to bypass the intellect and go straight to your heart.

Recently I wrote a song specifically for Rachel, who just joined us recently, to sing. The lyric is sort about me and a relationship that I'd had that hadn't worked out but the music is about Rachel. I'd been out for something to eat with Rachel one night and really got to know her better and after words I was thinking about the stuff she'd said and the funny little things she did that were peculiar to her and I start to hear little musical theme like a soundtrack. So I wanted to try to do a portrait of Rachel in music, or at least how I saw her then, and I hoped that would mean it would be something she would really fit perfectly when it found a lyric. Hearing Rachel sing that song "Doorways" is one of the greatest thrills I've ever had as a music maker.

Lance - Could you talk a little about the '80s indie pop scene? Do you feel like it was in any way an extension of the punk scene or was it an entirely separate entity?

Douglas - Well I thought of myself as a punk in 1977 and 78. Then if you liked punk you really were an outsider. It's not like now where the supposed alternative scene is so main stream. I think in the 1980s the indie scene was more a place for outsiders and eccentric, people who didn't fit in. Now it is so conservative mostly. There are still lots of great people making amazing music but it is harder to find them.

Lance - What are your best memories from those days?

Douglas - A lot of my memories are to do with different girls I had romantic adventures with. The two big loves of my life have always been girls and music. I'm not a womanizer but I love beauty. I love the excitement of kissing someone for the first time and feeling both of you trembling. I'm a romantic. I hate that a lot of people get in relationships because it is the done thing or because it is convenient or as a means to an end. A lot of those memories are attached to music of course.

I also remember at first how much bands like us or the Vaselines or the Pastels would be heckled or have stuff thrown at us. We were an annoyance, an irritant to some people and I quite enjoyed that sort of tension. I remember the first review we got in the music press said "this is the worst single ever made", then we caused a 27 minute long argument on the Radio One review show, I was so happy and excited about those early reactions.

Lance - Could you talk a bit about your relationship with 53rd and 3rd? It seems like the coolest, most underrated little record labels that nobody seems to remember.

Douglas - Well we were big fans of The Pastels, not just their music but of their attitude and ethos. So when BMX Bandits made our first demo I gave a copy to Stephen from the Pastels as a sort of thank you. I had never spoke to him before that but he offered to release something by us. At first 53rd & 3rd was so great but I think Stephen began to be forced out of the picture later and it really lost direction then and ultimately fell apart.

Lance - Could you explain why you called your first record "C86"? People in the States mostly don't know about that NME thing or even know what an anorak is.

Douglas - It was a dumb joke. We had been associated as being part of this British twee music scene in 1986 and were getting referred to as an anorak band and then the NME did this compilation called C86 of all these so called twee bands and we were such a notable omission. I think someone at the NME had decided we weren't cool enough so we were excluded. After that when the music press criticized us they would always refer to us as a C86 band. I used think "this is kind of ironic as we weren't on fucking C86" so when we finally made our own album we thought we'd call it C86. We thought, "on the first C86 we had no track but on this one we'll have all the tracks". It was a dumb idea but Norman and I thought it was funny at the time.

Lance - What were the live gigs like back in those days?

Douglas - Well compared to a lot of bands around then we were always lucky we had lots of great musicians who could play really well. A big turning point was when Francis joined on drums, we started to sound really good live. There was always a lot of humor in the live shows. Basically I'm very nervous about performing and the humor is a good way of distracting myself from the fact I'm up there singing all these personal songs to all these people.

Lance - Did you ever get any sort of response from "Kylie's Got A Crush On Us"?

Douglas - We heard that Kylie had heard it and liked it but that track was strange for me because it wasn't really our song. Gerry Love wrote it and we just started doing it for fun when Gerry guested with us a couple of times. I think it was a mistake doing it as a studio recording.

Lance - What was your relationship like with Creation?

Douglas - Our relationship with Alan McGee was great. He

really believed in the band and thought we could reach a major audience. He was very supportive and made sure everyone at the company knew it was important to him that they worked hard for BMX Bandits. Alan became ill and then our relationship with the company became less good with Alan away.

Lance - Do you ever feel upset about the number of line-up changes? Do you ever feel let down when someone leaves to start their own group?

Douglas - No, not at all. There was a time when Norman was the other main writer in the band but I'm such a massive fan of Norman the thing I wanted most was to hear Norman songs done by Norman. It was the same with the others. Now Rachel has joined and I think she could be a star someday if she wants to and has the luck. I'd love to see that happen and to be able to hear the records she might make.

Of course it's sad at the time but people often come back and contribute some times. Norman's on the new album. Change has always been a big part of BMX Bandits' it keeps things fresh.

Lance - What is something surprising that most people wouldn't know about BMX Bandits?

Douglas - I used to be a Punch & Judy man.

Lance - I know you named the band having never even seen the movie. But it's something of a cult fave here in the States. Have you seen it yet? What do you think?

Douglas - I've still never seen the movie. Does Nicole Kidman play me?

Lance - What were some of the highlights of your '98 US tour?

Douglas - The whole thing was amazing for us but it was great having Stevie Jackson playing guitar with

us then. He sang lead on "I Wanna Fall in Love" at those concerts.

Lance - Who is the most overrated band around?

Douglas - I'm not sure but I think we're the most underrated.

Lance - Do you think it's much more difficult for your band not being in London? Have you ever thought of moving?

Douglas - I think we couldn't have survived in London and we wouldn't be the band we are if we lived there. The community we come from is important to what we are.

Lance - If you could have written any one song in the world by any artist, what song would that have been?

Douglas - Today I'd say "Broken" by Teenage Fanclub. It is so simple and so elegant and so smart. It kills me every time I hear it. Norman is such an amazing talent and has real soul.

Lance - What's your favorite place to eat in your neighborhood?

Douglas - Sitting on my couch in my living room with my daughter while watching Futurama.

Lance - Anything else?

Douglas - I hope people will like the new album. I really think it is our best.



Bury The Living have been playing some of the most uncompromising hardcore I've EVER heard and they've been doing it for over seven fucking years. That's amazing for a lot of reasons not the least of which is that it means they've made that turn. They've taken that next step. A lot of times if you're in a really intense band like that, its sort of like holding a lit match to your palm. You sort of get off on the pain for a while, but you reach a breaking point. Most people have to blow out the flame. Others just acclimate and it takes a certain kind of person to get used to fire burning their flesh.

BURY THE LIVING

Such is the legacy of Bury The Living.

Lance - Bury The Living seem to be a part of the great Copout/Deathreap Memphis tradition. Are there other Memphis bands you feel you relate to? Anyone else you would say is part of that tradition?

Pat - Well it seems that only post copout bands every get any mention and that's a shame. Memphis has a really rich punk rock tradition. When I first started listening to punk there were bands like Komatoast, Sobering Consequences, Pazuzu, Raid, Pezz, Man With Gun Lives Here, Taintskins, even Econochrist was a technical local band. There was such diversity both musically and ideologically.... Copout was and is my favorite band they really had an impact on me. So yeah hopefully we are a part of that. As far as bands today that are part of that tradition I would have to say three come to mind immediately Evil Army, That Was Then, and F.U.T.

Lance - How has the band or at least your feelings about the band changed in the last, what is it, 7 years?

Pat - Hmmmmm how have my feelings changed...well I have never felt closer to the people I played in this band with. I think the music has gone from basic old school hardcore to something that's not easy to define and for me that's awesome because it keeps it fresh. Bury The Living is the band I've always wanted to be in so I guess the major change is its gone from something I did for fun to something I have to do because I love it and couldn't imagine not doing it. It's my real family.

Lance - What are some of the specific differences from FMD and BTL?

Pat - Well I think the main difference is just the sound. FMD was very quirky...not like in a Flipper way it was just full of very unique personalities and that definitely came out in the music. Lyrically I was much darker and more vague. I think some people even thought it was way to vague.

Lance - Do you feel like it's still harder for a Memphis band to get recognition even in the DIY world versus a band from LA, SF, Chicago, etc.?

Pat - I think it's harder for any band to get recognized unless you pick a generic sound and play it better than everyone else. Its honestly not any form of sour grapes but some of the bands that are huge these days I'm just like what the fuck are you guys listening to coz when I put on this record it bores the shit out of me.... I think its a mix of every band on the planet having a record out before they even play a show...you know flooding the "market" if you will...and its

really hard to decide what to give a shot unless you see a band live.... and a general sense of who gives a fuck in the scene today. That's my mix. That's my good bands that get overlooked cocktail. I think the two best bands in hardcore right now are Signal Lost and Army Of Jesus. Most people would say who's Army Of Jesus. Their record deserves a lot of attention and as far as I know hasn't really gotten it yet. So if you're reading this fucking go get that 7".

Lance - One of the great things about your lyrics is their totally caustic tone. Do you think that you purposely present

your ideas in a way that will be most shocking? Do you think that you use shock value to hammer home a point or do you just like fucking with people?

Pat - Well that's an easy one coz I am a very caustic person in general AND I like fucking with people. I guess in a way I do make them shocking on purpose because really what better way to make your ideas stand out in people's heads? And since when is punk not supposed be caustic and in your face? Seems like what shocks people in the scene today would've been an average day at the office 20 years ago. Punk and hardcore are too fucking safe these days. I wanna go hang out with punks not a Sunday school class.

Lance - Every time I've seen the band, you talk about using the word "nigger" and how you don't think we should avoid it as a way to always remember our racist history. Could you talk a little more about that and why you think there is such a knee-jerk reaction to the word, right or wrong? Do you think that by using the word you also can take the power away from it or is that just bullshit? I know some people quote Lenny Bruce who used to think we should overuse terms like "nigger" to get rid of the fear of the word as that's where the power comes from. Other people think that in modern times it's just a cheap way for movies like Tarantino's movies to get away with using racism for fun.

Pat - No I don't think words like nigger and faggot should be used all the time. I went through my Lenny Bruce phase where I thought that was a solution and I was wrong. I use it on stage to let people know its still there. That it's still a factor. There's a big difference between using it as a part of your art or as part of trying to discuss the issues and just using it with friends in a coffee shop you know? Some people get bent over it and that's fine as long as the "can you believe what a racist piece of politically incorrect shit Pat Cox is?" Turns into a long conversation about racism in America or gay rights or women's rights... The cool part is when people get upset and then approach me about it after the show and what generally happens is we have a nice long discussion and I hear their side and usually they understand mine and its really nice. Like in DC this girl didn't like my explanation for our song "WHORE". She came to me literally in tears and wanted to tear me a new one but it ended up being a really powerful experience I think for the both of us. I guess you had to be there but that's when I really decided to turn that kinda shit up a notch. Whats the point of any of this if you cant affect people like that?

Lance - You just put out an LP with 20 songs and you are already posting new lyrics. How busy is the band? How quickly do you write songs?

Pat - We have 5 very creative people in our band and we practice twice a week so every practice there are a couple of new songs. We don't keep all of them but I'd say about 90% we do. What's cool about it is there is no main songwriter. Every song starts out as one persons idea then it beings a group effort. Everyone really does contribute to every song. I know that was a little off topic but its a point of pride for me how well we all work together to write music.

Lance - Could you talk a bit about Soul Is Cheap and your relationship with them?

Pat - well our friend Zack started Soul Is Cheap and then our guitar player Shawn kinda became his partner so we have always had a good relationship with that label. They put out our first LP when no one else would and I will always be grateful for that. They really mainly do non-hardcore stuff like Lucero but that doesn't bother us...does that bother you? Huh lance? Does it? (Pat pokes lance with a large wooden spoon).

Lance - What's the best place to eat in Memphis?

Pat - I would say Pho Ha Bihn...could be misspellin' that but whatever. Amazing Vietnamese food.

Lance - What always sort of surprises me is that in many if not most reviews of your latest record, you get compared to old school straight edge bands. Why do you think that is? Do you feel any sort of relationship to that scene? I personally don't see it at all...

Pat - Well I think a lot of people who review A LOT of stuff at once and don't really pay much attention to what they are reviewing. The reviews that compare us to Articles Of Faith and things like that are much more accurate I think. I think because there are some breakdowns its easy to say oh they sound like sick of it all. We have so many influences though and Agnostic Front is definitely one of them but I really have never understood that comparison nor did I when some people used to say we sounded like His Hero Is Gone.... open your ears jack asses. As far as our relationship to that scene we get a great response from

the kids that are into that kinda stuff. There isn't a ton of regular ole punk rock in this area so when you play Memphis, Nashville, Little Rock etc you end up playing with a lot

of chugga chugga type bands and the kids at those shows for the most part have never been exposed to anything else and they are generally pretty stoked to hear something different. I remember when I was a kid there wasn't much difference between the Sobering Consequences crowd and the Raid crowd...it was one scene and I wish we could get back to that mentality. Sure there were conflicts but challenging each others beliefs is an important thing. Most shows today are a collection of totally like minded people and it bores the shit out of me. More fights please!!! Please note that I am laughing

but also half serious about this.

Lance - Do you think there's a correlation with the fact

that a lot of us are in our 30's now and we are getting more interested in old school hardcore and the whole nature of the '80s underground scene? What I'm wondering is do you think we're really trying to make something important happen or are we all just having a mid-life punk crisis? Pat - I think we are all clinging to the feelings of past glory but also we see the possibility to re-ignite a long dead fire but are going about it the wrong way. We need to examine what it was about that time in our lives that really inspired

us and focus on showing that to the younger kids not just focusing on the way the bands sounded. The music was important to me but it was only half of what really turned me on to the punk scene.

Lance - Having said that, you guys are about to go play with Larm and Mob 47 so you'll probably be feeling like the youngsters at the party. What do you think about all these old groups getting back together? It's certainly not for the money. It's probably not the fame. What's it all about?

Pat - I think anyone who has ever been on stage, especially anyone who has ever done it successfully, gets a little bit addicted to it. I think

for the most part these reunions are more about that previously mentioned past glory thing. I know if 20 years from now people are listening to Bury The Living I'd be the first one to wanna do a reunion show. Fuck the money and fuck

BURY THE LIVING



the fame. It would be all about that feeling. That release.
Lance - What to you is the best Bury The Living song and why?



Pat - My favorite Bury The Living song will always be "Banned For Life". Its the first song this band every wrote almost 8 years ago. I love it for the simplicity of it. There's nothing heavy about it its just a DIY battle cry. Very straightforward and to the point...almost innocent compared to some of the stuff I write these days. Plus it's a really fun sing along-y type song.

Lance - If you could have written one song from any other band, what song would it be?

Pat - "Buy This War" by Articles Of Faith.

Lance - What's it like in the van with Bury The Living? What's your worst tour story?

Pat - Being in the van with us is like a nightmare of vulgarity, body fluids, and farting. honestly for the most part it is the funniest place you could ever possibly be. The worst tour story to me would be the time we showed up in Montana to a cancelled show then had to drive 26 straight hours to Kansas with very little in the way of gas money. On the way we had our subway sandwiches made by and coughed on by 2 employees that looked like the people from the hills have eyes with leprosy and the band almost broke up by the time we got there. A lot of that however was due to me being a total dick. Sometimes.... I'm a total dick.

Lance - Tell me something I wouldn't know about wrestling. What would surprise me?

Pat - I think most people would be surprised at how much work really goes into it. I played every sport imaginable in high school and I have never been pushed to my physical limits more than training to become a wrestler. People who did come by and watch were completely shocked. I also think a lot of people think its just a couple of dudes beating the fake shit out of each other for 20 minutes when in reality its like a dance. It's like synchronized ass whipping. You really have to think on your feet when you're in the ring. Its much more of a science than people think....and yes it does hurt...a lot.

Lance - Is there any sort of crossover in the wrestling and punk worlds? Do you get punks going to matches and vice versa?

Pat - Nah used to have a few punks come see me but not so much any more. I don't wrestle in Memphis much these days coz there really isn't a crowd for it anymore and Jerry Lawler's worthless ass has seen to its demise personally. I spend most of my time in the ring in creepy small southern

towns where they get mad and will actually try to shoot you for hurting their favorite wrestler. I have been smuggled out of towns in the back of more than one squad car.

Lance - Is wrestling real?

Pat - fuck yes its real. Let me take anyone who wonders into a ring and slam them a couple hundred times and shove thumb tacks into their faces and wrap them in barbed wire and set them on fire and beat them in the head with a steel chair and then tell me its fake. Its predetermined...the ending I mean. But the violence in real wrestling is very much real. Fuck the WWE and its weak ass shit, and fuck anyone who thinks they have the slightest idea what wrestling is.

Lance - Have you ever thought about leaving Memphis?

Pat - If I didn't have to take care of my grandmother I would've left Memphis a long time ago. In fact if there are any European ladies out there who want to get married so I can get a EU work visa please let me know coz my ultimate goal is to get my sweet country ass the fuck out of this country entirely. Not to kiss ass but if I were to leave Memphis for anywhere else in the country it would be Austin. I fucking love you people.



BURY THE LIVING

RICH CRUSTIES WILL PAY EUROPE TOUR 2006



Drift Age are a great band from Japan. Gunslinger guitar playing with a powerful rhythm section that explodes live. There's also a lot of melody like a young Leatherface or if Husker Du were ever in shape. Can't wait to hear some new songs.

Lance - How did you get into punk rock? What were some of the first bands you were into?

Drift Age - When I search for the root of a favorite band, there was The Jam, The Clash. The band that I felt most fun is them.

Lance - What was punk rock like in Matsuyama in the early days?

Drift Age - There were many punk bands, but, they could not make punk scene in Matsuyama. Now it has not been changing yet.

Lance - Do you think living on the island of Shikoku makes the music scene more isolated and unique from the scenes in Osaka and Tokyo?

Drift Age - Of course. Of course, while some bands try to make scene, the foolish bands who aim to sales are more popular than them. Some of the reason, Shikoku has a small

population.

And they slight or don't know the underground punk scene. Almost bands join making scene out of Shikoku; perhaps, because they give up Shikoku...

Lance - Do you feel like bands from Shikoku get ignored?

Drift Age - I don't think so. I don't feel that Shikoku is ignored. But it seems that few people have interest to Shikoku... Shikoku may get ignored.

Lance - Are there many other bands in Matsuyama?

Drift Age - Yes of course. For example, Big Hand Family, Forget Me Not, and Circle Flex, they are great hardcore punk band, we love them!

Lance - Were any of you in bands before Drift Age? What were they like?

Drift Age - Takahiro & Koichiro played melodic punk band named "reflection in the mirror". But it's not so cool, this band dissolved after a year. Yoshihiko have played crazy drums in a noise band named "Syayou" in Yamaguchi.

Lance - Why did you choose the name Drift Age? What does the name mean for you?

Drift Age - It means ironically the age today. The thing and information overflow too much. Without the steady consideration, we will be thrown into it. Because we want to don't forget it, we named "DRIFT AGE" our band.

Lance - What do you love about your hometown?

Drift Age - Dogo Onsen, J (Used clothing store, MBB's George had been as Manager!), and Hoshizora JETT!

DRIFT AGE

Lance - What do you hate about your hometown?

Drift Age - We cannot drink with happiness all the day, because we miss friends who have gone away from our town. The punks are not in this town! Matsuyama is not burning!

Lance - What do you do in your free time?

Drift Age - At first I go fishing at pond in the morning. Next read books in the afternoon. And lastly get drunk at Hoshizora JETT until blotto. This is my most joyful holiday...

Lance - Do you ever visit Matsuyamajo or Dogo Onsen? Or is that just for the tourists?

Drift Age - Yes, we have visited there. Surely, many tourists visit there. But we go to there, too. And we are proud of there.

Lance - Who were the Matsudaira family?

Drift Age - What is this?

Lance - How often do you get to play in your hometown? What are those shows like?

Drift Age - We get to play about twice in a month. People who came to our show enjoyed. But the punk scene doesn't liven up.

Lance - Do you ever listen to old Japanese punk? What are some of your favorite Japanese bands?

Drift Age - Of course. Laughin' Nose, The Star Club, Anarchy etc...

Lance - What are your favorite Mangas?

Drift Age - Our favorite caricaturists are Fujiko Fujio, Tezuka Osamu, Mizuki Shigeru, and Otomo Katsuhiro.

Lance - Do you think prefer horror, science fiction or fantasy?

Drift Age - Fujiko Fujio said, SF is "Sukosi Fushigina". Sukosi Fushigina means "little wonder" in English.

Lance - Did you like the last Godzilla movie ("Godzilla: Final Wars")?

Drift Age - Sorry, we have not seen it yet. But Koichiro has a Godzilla's toy. It can walk and scream!

Lance - How many recordings does the band have?

Drift Age - Four times. 4songs demo 01(01/2004 self) V/A "Here Comes The Bottom Line" (08/2004 from Impulse Records & glass of water) EP.

"Paint it Black" (02/2005 from SNUFFY SMILE) V/A "The Bastards Can't Dance - A Tribute To Leatherface" (03/2005 from SNUFFY SMILE).

Lance - What are your future plans?

Drift Age - We want to liven up Matsuyama as much as Tokushima. But we may move to Kyoto, because we are capricious.

Lance - Anything else?

Drift Age - We do our best at our own pace. Thank you Lance & J Church!



I loved Hagar The Womb. They were so weird and funny. They're not at all what you would expect from an old anarcho band coming out of the Wapping @ Centre. Totally catchy with two female vocalists that in some ways was the template for future groups like Dan and Shelley's Children. Really nice folks to this day!

Lance -
First of all, how did you get into punk rock? How

did you first hear about it?

Ruth - Through Top of the Pops - the Pistols and the Buzzcocks - and then the Stranglers. And then the other strands started emerging, gave Oi the widest birth but someone bought a Crass LP around which blew me away - I had to turn it down to stop my mum hearing all the swearing.

Jon - First I heard of punk was my sister getting a copy of "God Save The Queen" in 77, which made a real impression on me - it was the energy and apparent simplicity of it that made such an impression. I was 13/14 at the time and had been into t-rex, bowie etc. at first I only heard the commercial stuff from radio 1 / TOTP etc. (Pistols, Adverts, Generation X, Buzzcocks, etc.) then started listening to peel and hearing subway sect, slits, banshees...

The anarcho thing was quite a few years later - I'd heard Crass (I traded my Clash album for "Feeding Of The 5000") and was impressed with the records and their attitude. The connection really came about thru my friend's band (cold war) playing in Southend with the Apostles and Sinyx who told us about the A centre. It had only just opened, not had the first gig and we just went along to hang out and meet people...

Paul - I think that I probably heard about punk from all the media hype surrounding the Sex Pistols; and from friends. Punk completely changed the course of my whole life. It was far more than a mere fashion statement; this was music that anybody could play. I was drawn to the positive attitude surrounding punk, the idea of creating something from nothing, to escape the boredom of the Suburbs of late 70's London. When we first heard about punk, me and my friends were too young to go to gigs, (I mean, I was 12 in 1977!) but that didn't stop us from going up by Tube to the Rough Trade shop just to look around as well as to buy records. The one redeeming feature of Hornchurch, the suburb of London where I grew up was that it is on the edge of the Tube network. The John Peel show was just about the only place on the radio where you could hear any of this music at the time. Not only did he play some excellent records but the show was an invaluable source of information and inspiration. Best of all was that we had discovered that the security at the Hammersmith Palais and also The Lyceum in the Strand would often turn a blind eye to under 18's, so by the time I was 15 I had seen bands like The Damned, the Ruts and Siouxsie and the Banshees.

Lance - Were you in any other bands before Hagar The Womb? How did you start playing music?

Ruth - No. We never really started playing music, it was forced upon us. We had a massive learning curve as most of us had never picked up instruments before (and were reluctant to do so I can remember) as we got better at them we just progressed I suppose. Never get the impression

we started knowing how to do things!

Paul - The impact of punk was so great that I was already learning to play guitar, as were a bunch of my friends. In my neighborhood there was like, 7 or 8 of us learning to play instruments as a direct response to punk. Eventually after various bedroom-bands (3 guitarists and a drummer play-

ing cardboard boxes, that type of thing) our first proper

HAGAR THE WOMB

band was formed called Cold War. Our bass player was Chris who was later to become the Hagar drummer. He lived in the same street from me. The drummer was Kev Antfood and Ian our singer. At this stage we had a drummer with almost a full drum kit, my cheap'n'nasty guitar, a bass that was ok-ish and a singer that looked and sounded good. I can still remember our first gig quite clearly; I was 16 years old at the time, the others all about that age too. We traveled by train to Cliff's Pavilion in Southend -on-sea with our guitars and drumsticks. There was a load of bands all playing short sets but using the same amps and drum kit. This suited us down to the ground cos we didn't have any money to buy these things and even if we did we couldn't get them anywhere as we were too young to drive...I remember when it was Our Turn to go on stage, I was so nervous that I could barely plug my guitar in, then after a count in from the drummer I had to play the first few notes of the intro to the first song. I switched on my fuzz box and suddenly my guitar blasted out from the PA. I could hear the sound of my guitar echoing back through the venue louder than I had ever heard it before, it sounded so powerful. The feeling was truly fantastic! People actually clapped after the first song finished, I couldn't believe it! This was so encouraging that the next song was even better than the first. 15 minutes later the gig was over, we felt triumphant, jubilant and sweaty; my life was never going to be the same again.

Jon - I'd never had any interest in playing music until punk - it was partly the attitude of 'anyone can do it' that got me started with my first guitar. Once I'd learnt a few chords I started playing with people from school and writing songs

I played in a few bands at school, then joined a local punk band (Screaming Babies from Hornchurch) not long before Hagar the Womb so was in both of them at the same time. The Screaming Babies were very influenced by the Damned and later gothic and post-punk stuff (UK Decay, Bauhaus, Joy Division, Theatre of Hate, Southern Death Cult, etc.)

Lance - How did the band first form? How did you know the other members? Wasn't the original line-up all women from the Wapping Anarchist Centre?

Ruth - We mostly met at Kingsway College - some doing a secretarial course (they shall remain nameless) and others doing far more trendy things. The great ginger man Todd told us about Wapping in the canteen and we headed to the same that very Sunday, gave it a whirl and never looked back. We formed in the toilets (a traditional meeting place for women) at Wapping 'cos we were sick of being ignored by the right on PC men there who were busy taking control and excluding us. Maybe they didn't intend to, but you can't be too careful...

Jon - The band formed from a few people who knew each

other (Ruth, Karen, Stephanie, Janet, Nicola) and others they met thru the Wapping A centre. The original plan was to be an all girl band but they couldn't find a girl drummer so got a guy called scarecrow/rich in who wore a kilt. They did a few gigs in this line-up, mainly at the A centre after a few months they asked Chris (Knowles, also of Cold War) to join on drums, they then asked me to play lead guitar. Mitch we also knew from the A centre and Paul, who replaced me, was in Chris's other band Cold War.

Lance - What kinds of songs were you writing back then? Did any of your earliest songs ever wind up on record?

Ruth - Unfortunately "Puff the Magic Dragon" ("who lives by the sea, he didn't have a lot to do but he believed in anarchyyyyyyy") never made it to disc but others did like "Babies" and "Dressed to Kill" and (wince) "Cardboard Theatre".

Jon - I think the majority of the songs that we were playing when I was in the band were never released. The tracks on the Xntrix session included: "Routine", "Babies", "Polluted Ideals", "Cardboard Theatre", "Fight Back", "Silent Minority", "Friends", "Armchair Observer", "Dressed To Kill". Only one song I played on ever got released and that was "Polluted Ideals" (on "Who, What, Why, Where, When?" on Mortarhate).

Lance - Who came up with the name? What did it mean to you?

Ruth - It's a pretty abstract religious reference for a band name. I did and I have always hated saying it and have always lived to regret it and will die doing so and was soooo surprised that it was adopted, as it was the crappiest suggestion I have ever made, in fun and in peacetime! It means nothing; people make their own references for it.

Jon - The name was there before I joined but it's a biblical reference to an enslaved woman. I'm not that familiar with the bible so don't know the details that well but - I think the story was that Abraham had a barren wife (sarah) and slave (hagar) who was his concubine. It was a sort of feminist statement about women being used for their reproductive capabilities. A lot of people related it to the Hagar the Horrible cartoons!

Lance - What were live gigs like back in those days? Did you ever play with any of the big bands like Crass or Conflict?

Ruth - Gigs were anarchic, ie chaotic - small stages, mostly mates in other bands crowding round, very home made and cozy. The big bands were little bands then, though some were littler than others. I do remember Crass playing as a small(er) band at Wapping - though I also remember we all coveted the kettle after someone from Crass had touched it - we must've known Crass would be a big cheese!!!

Jon - The first few gigs (before Chris and I joined) were very shambolic with the band getting drunk (nerves!?) and being very un-together... Chris made a big difference as he could drum with his hands and feet at the same time! This pulled things together a lot and it started to tighten up. The first gig was at the A centre with Zounds, the Mob, Null and Void, the Apostles and Luz y Fuerza (I remember the bill as I recorded the whole gig). There were a few gigs with the Apostles and then we did a lot with Conflict and also the Mob... there was also one at the 100 Club with Poison Girls and Benjamin Zephaniah in '83.

Paul - We played with Conflict quite a bit but never with Crass. Just before I joined them Hagar played with Conflict at the Brixton Ace. This was a landmark gig for the band,

despite my not being there! Quite soon after I joined HTW Conflict again played the Ace (about 800 capacity venue, I guess) and we played with them again. Wicked gig though! I loved it. Big stage to dance around on, stage invaded by dancers, the set went down well with the crowd, a near perfect gig! The shambolic nature of the band seemed to transfer well to bigger stages probably cos there was about 7 of us in the band to start with. Sometimes there was even more cos we often had a few more people dancing on the stage with us for the whole gig. We used to like this anyway. At this stage we never had any backline equipment other than my guitar amp, which sometimes made it to gigs, sometimes not. I remember playing tons of gigs with other bands amps, this I didn't really mind as it saved me from having to carry one around. In about '77 or '78 I read an interview with the Banshees and they said that they used to turn up at gigs and pretend that their non-existent van had broken down on the way to the gig. This justified borrowing their support bands equipment for the gig cos they had none of their own. Well I'm afraid to say that this was us too on more than one occasion, though we weren't always so deceitful about it.

We played at a punk all-day in Leeds with Black Flag headlining on their first visit to the UK. This was a really good gig, though we didn't care much for Black Flag at the time. They kind of sounded more like a heavy rock version of the Stooges to us.

At an early gig at the Moonlight in Hampstead I remember that Chris wasn't let in - because he didn't look 18! After pleading with the manager "I'm in the Band!" he was finally allowed in.

Lance - How did it come to pass that you would record a full-length cassette for Mortarhate?

Ruth - It came to pass that Colin paid for us to go do it and even joined us on backing vocals for "Rock and Roll" - that's probably why it came to pass that it was never released.

Lance - Why did that recording never get released?

Ruth - I refer you to my previous answer. I don't know of its whereabouts, probably in Colin's garage!

Lance - What was it like recording with Pete Fender?

Ruth - He played with us a few times as well. He was a true pro. I am surprised he didn't leave the room/venue etc in disgust.

Lance - How did you all get your nicknames? Ruth Rad-ish? Janetti Spaghetti? Steph T.O.S.P.? Chris Elephant Face? I guess I can figure out how Jon From Bromley got his name!

Ruth - You have done your homework! Sheer exuberant youthfulness I'd say. Incidentally, Steph was TOSPP. I know what it means but many don't and I dare say Steph might have forgotten by now, and stopped wincing...

Lance - What do you think were some of the main political issues that the band were concerned with?

Ruth - Well, therein lies the rub. We weren't very political cos we felt there were enough angry bands out there and they all looked and sounded the same. When people asked us about our politics in interviews at the time, we'd just chorus: the youth on the street are angry - and fall about laughing. Oh we had fun. Our politics were with a small p and we wrote mostly about things that were in our face, like the way people change if they think you're a deal, and getting on the slap to go out for the night - and rape and wars and animal cruelty as well - we weren't totally frivolous!

Lance - Did the band tour much? How would you compare

anarcho punk scenes outside of London?

Ruth - We toured all over the UK and the continent as well - it is my lasting regret we never did the states and influence the likes of Operation Ivy and Minor Threat in the making - but hey, they didn't do too badly... Dunno about punk scenes out of London, we just went out of a van, into a venue and back in the van again via a chippie. In between people jumped about and looked like they were enjoying themselves. I don't think Liverpool has a scene, I can't remember going there with the Hags but I did with Dirt and there was not a punky looking person in the venue - and that's not a reflection on Dirt before you think it, they were a sterling effort!

Paul - We did more one-offs than tours cos there were so many people in the band it was an organizational nightmare just to rehearse let alone tour! We used to play places like Leeds quite a lot, South Wales; also did some but not all dates on a Conflict tour or two. We did go on tour in Holland once though. This was ok cos once everyone was together and out of the UK the organizing problems were much easier.

The anarcho scene outside London was quite varied, stronger in some places than others. Many of the punks who would go to anarcho

gigs would go to other types of gig too. There was a strong crossover between the different (punk/ post-punk) scenes. Very occasionally in later days we would get all these glue-sniffing types at anarcho gigs too which was a bit of a problem, yuck! I can still remember That Smell.

Lance - What did you think of the anarcho punk scene at that point? How entrenched in it were you?

Ruth - It was just like a club, people knew each other and were friendly or not so - can't remember much that was anarcho about it apart from the 'anyonecandoit' spirit, just the usual bits of one upmanship, competition, deals, excess alcohol consumption and general substance misuse. Oh and everyone seemed to go out with each other and break up and go out with someone else - just like in school. And in the middle of it all, Ivan Oxo from the Assassins of Hope would clear up the anarchy centre. He was famous for doing this and had a song dedicated to him: who works at the dhss - Ivan Oxo! who clears up the anarchy centre after everyone has left and gone home - Ivan Oxo! It even had a tune.

Jon - The band met thru and started within the anarcho-

punk scene so was always associated with it. The original members of the band were learning to play while they were gigging. Apart from a few refinements and mastery of instruments, not a lot changed over the time I was in the band.

I think we were part of the scene because we were there at the time but, like a lot of the other bands around, not all the members had the same political views. I always felt the band was more about personal politics rather than government/society politics.

Paul - Personally I found it hilarious, entertaining, educational, optimistic- but in a good way, and at times infuriatingly naive. What was really good about punk was that there would be gigs organized by people who just liked the music and didn't work in the music business. So there were lots of one-off gigs organized in venues in places such as village halls, sports halls, civic centres, social clubs and so on. We used to enjoy ourselves first and foremost. We were sick of bands that were so fucking serious on stage yet would be laughing & joking backstage; what hypocrites...HTW lyrics were pretty serious stuff overall yet the bands presentation wasn't. The world might have been shit but that wasn't going to stop us from having

a good time...There were lots of people who failed to see the humor in bands like Crass and Flux.

Lance - How did you feel about the Crass / anarcho scene at the time? Did you feel like it was a movement or a clique?

Jon - It seemed a bit of both, plus a bit of (anti?) fashion as well. It was also an alternative - punk had split into a few seemingly mutually exclusive factions with the Exploited / Anti-Pasti / Vice Squad etc being one, the Gary Bushell promoted Oi! as another and anarcho-punk which seemed musically more adventurous and less commercially oriented tho I have to admit that I liked and disliked bands from all three

Lance - Do you think there were weird attitudes towards the band being mostly women in a male dominated scene?

Ruth - I mean, there always are, but were there tangible effects on the band? There was some marginalizing - we weren't taken very seriously but that might have something to do with the fact that we were not taking ourselves very seriously either. I do remember bands we played with didn't like us to headline, maybe 'cos we were mostly women or



maybe 'cos they genuinely felt they should, hard to tell. We just went our own merry way and didn't change anything about ourselves - boobtubes, eyeliner, hairspray, our stage dancers - all remained intact!

Paul - I guess that we were not taken as seriously as some of the other bands around because of the women in the band, but cos we thought that the anarcho scene tended to take itself a bit too seriously anyway, this was not that much of a problem. A very positive effect of the band being mostly women was that other bands who we would be gigging with wouldn't regard us as a threat so we never seemed to get any rivalry with other bands.

Lance - What bands were you listening to at the time? What was influencing the song writing?

Ruth - Everyone liked different bands so I can't speak for all - apart from Mitch would probably kill me if I didn't mention the Mekons. I was mostly listening to UK Decay, the Wall, Crisis and Boney M when we started and progressed to - well the Modettes and Dirt, I couldn't fault them though plenty of others seemed to.

Jon - The inspirations were a bit different across the band. The original line-up was inspired by the anarcho scene (Crass, Poison Girls, Mob, Rubella Ballet, Subhumans, Flux, etc) but also punk in general. Chris made the biggest difference to the sound being into wire, PiL, Banshees, Cure etc. followed by Mitch with his more funky bass style.

Paul - Killing Joke, PiL, Bauhaus, UK decay, The Mob, Couldn't say if they influenced the songwriting at all...

Lance - How did you decide to do the first 12" with Mortarhate? Were you still under obligation after the first cassette wasn't released?

Ruth - We did our first 12" with Mortarhate 'cos Colin said we could have our own badges if we did. There, that is how simple it is folks (or how simple we were folks!). Dunno about the cassette, it wasn't really mentioned. Colin's mums probably chucked it out of his garage by now...

Lance - Had there been any other releases before "The Word Of The Womb"? Compilations or demo tapes?

Ruth - We did our own tapes and sent them to people. If anyone did anything else, please step forward.

Jon - There were a couple of recording sessions, some of rehearsals (at the basement club in Covent Garden) and eventually the recordings for a proposed cassette album for Mortarhate which we recorded with Pete Fender at Xntrix Studios (the Poison Girls basement). The line-up for this session was: Ruth / Karen (vocals), Stephanie (bass), Janet (guitar), Chris (drums), Jon (guitar). As part of this session we also recorded a version of Gary Glitter's "Rock and Roll" with members of Poison Girls, Rubella Ballet and Conflict on vocals. A similar line up (with Mitch Flacko now on bass) re-recorded all the tracks for the album at a studio in Notting Hill. I'd left the band by this time but went in for a day to do guitars - I think this session was either scrapped or the lead guitar parts re-done by Paul Harding (my replacement). There were also loads of live tapes about (I recorded their first few gigs...)

Lance - Who wrote the lyrics for that record? What were some of the ideas behind the songs?

Ruth - Janet and I did "Dressed to Kill" on the 253 bus coming back from school, I did "Idolization", Chris did "A Song of Deep Hate" - or was that on the next one, help!!! We all mucked in is the simple answer. Ideas came mostly from incidents.

Lance - Hagar The Womb always seemed a bit more playful than most of the anarcho crowd. How was that first record received by the anarchos?

Ruth - Some they liked us some they liked us not very much and some they liked us not at all - but we never got to see them cos they were no shows at our shows! We did occasionally cross, angry men in black. They laughed at us for not wearing black and we laughed at them for doing so - I'm sure it was all deeper at the time, but that's my recollection on a Weds afternoon at work.

Paul - Fine I think, not that we were bothered about things like that. We were never everyone's favorite cos there was a poppier side to the band. What was interesting and amazing was that John Peel really picked up on the record and played it loads. This was great for us because people outside of the Anarcho scene were getting into the band. People who would never buy say, a Crass record could hear what we had to say.

Lance - Did you feel at all connected to any of the other anarcho bands? Were there any bands that you felt especially close to?

Ruth - We loved Decadent Few (ex-Youthnasia) and Look Mummy Clowns (ex-Erratics) and did a lot of gigs together, they were other bands on the scene who were different, had a good sense of themselves and a good sense of the ridiculous. Our first gig was with the Mob and Zounds and they were sterling efforts as well. Conflict people were a laugh, though Colin was a bit dodgy if always up for it... Other bands we were not great mates with at the time but are now, like Dirt and Rubella Ballet. Its this weird thing about being like family, that's what it feels like when you meet up now however you got on with each other way back when.

Jon - A lot of the bands we were close to because we knew each other thru the A centre (Apostles, Assassins of Hope, Part 1...) - it started off for Hagar as a very friendly thing based around the A centre at Wapping - quite a small number of people who all knew each other and a lot were in bands. The bands weren't closely related musically but more in their outlook and ideals.

Paul - I especially liked the Mob, Lack Of Knowledge and Flowers In The Dustbin. I suppose we were connected to Conflict through the record and some of the gigs but musically we were worlds apart.

Lance - How do you reflect back on that record? What do you think of the songs and the recording? Are you still talking about word of the womb?

Ruth - As a singer (ha ha) I was outraged that we weren't introduced to the echo machine and our vocals were unembellished for all to hear. Otherwise I think we acquitted ourselves quite well, considering the crumbling ruin we made of live performances...

Paul - I was proud of the record and the songs, looking back, I wish we could have spent more time in the studio though.

Lance - Who did all the graphics for the band? They're really unique and striking.

Ruth - Tony D (of - anyone remember Kill Your Pet Puppy - and less likely, Windy Miller and the Windmills?) did the giraffe on WOTW modeled on one on my bedroom wall at the time - and Asa did Funnery, and we are forever indebted...

Paul - Brett did the artwork, a friend of Ruth's I think. I liked the idea of the teddy bear with the A-sign, a good jibe at the

purists in the Scene..

Lance - What do you remember about recording that record? Was it your first time in a studio?

Ruth - Can't remember much at all except that it was hot inside and out. It probably was our first time in a studio, we had to be told and shown a lot.

Jon - The early recordings were fun but a bit stressful - our first bass player left after the xntrix recordings as it showed up in the studio that a lot of the guitar and bass parts didn't fit with each other and it ended up being the bass parts that all got changed! It was good fun though having the six of us in the studio and members of Poison Girls, Rubella Ballet, Conflict etc. dropping by.

By the time of the recordings in Notting Hill, I'd left the band and turned up to just add my guitar tracks to already finished songs - I didn't see the rest of the band so it was like being a session musician...

Paul - The record was recorded quite quickly, with very few overdubs and not enough pizza to eat.... It wasn't my first time in the studio as Cold War had been in the studio before recording demos.

Lance - Why did you split with the group? Was it personal or musical or what?

Jon - The main reason was getting married and moving to Milton Keynes... I kind of justified it to myself (and others) that I wasn't that into the music but thinking back, we'd just started getting to the stage of putting new material together that was much stronger and the music was coming from Chris and Mitch (idolization and m.i.f. were done just before I left) and the reaction at gigs was getting better - I guess the band was getting better all the time when I quit...

Lance - Did you play in any other bands after you left Hagar the Womb?

Jon - I didn't play at all for a couple of years, then drifted back into it and did some stuff around Milton Keynes with a variety of goth influenced bands (Banshees meets All About Eve!?), then some acoustic stuff before finally starting solo recordings in an ambient/post-rock/electronica vein as Yellow 6 which I'm still doing now.

Lance - How did you know Hagar The Womb? Had you seen any of their early gigs? Did you know them from the Wapping Anarchy Centre? What year was that?

Paul - On the train back from the first Cold War gig we met some people who told us about the Anarchy Centre where there was gigs on Sunday nights that bands like us could get to play. This was just what we needed to hear. A week or

2 later we played at the Anarchy Centre and from this more gigs followed on. It was there that we met the people who were to become Hagar. The band were actually formed one evening at the Anarchy Centre I seem to remember (You need to ask Ruth about this to be sure). Their original guitarist Jon Attwood was a fellow Hornchurch- boy and Hagar drummer Chris was also the bass player in Cold War. He used to say that he always wanted to play drums as well so here was the perfect opportunity for him to do so!

The year must have been either late '81 or early '82. I remember seeing one of the early Hagar gigs and thinking that it was crap, a complete shambles, yet at the same time they had a certain something. They were very spirited and had that exuberance and excitement that so many bands lack.

Lance - Was it a difficult transition from Jon to you? Were you playing the songs they had recorded for the Mortarhate cassette or were you focused on new material?

Paul - No, Jon left on amicable terms, I even remember him showing me how to play some of the songs :) The cassette! It's all coming back to me now! Shit! How do you know about this? I think some of the songs were from the cassette and there were some new songs too. Eventually Cold War split up and Chris & myself carried on in HTW.

Lance - That record came out in '84, did you tour much to support it? How did your gigs change?

Ruth - I think we toured more thru being part of Mortarhate than cos of the record, I don't think we did many gigs in our own right at the time.

Paul - I wished we could have toured more when the record came out but the chaos that was HTW somehow prevented this. The gigs started to change as we would get more people in to the more poppy side of the band coming along.

Lance - Were you working or doing anything else outside of the band at the time?

Ruth - Some were some weren't. For me, that period personally coincided with 5 fruitful years living off the state.

Paul - I was working as an apprentice engineer. There was not enough hours in the day.

Lance - "Funnery In A Nunnery" followed in early '85. First off, what does the title mean?

Ruth - I don't know if the title came before the cover or the cover before the title, but they definitely influenced each other. It means nothing but it rhymes.

Paul - Not much, just a bit mischievous really.

Lance - How was this record different from the previous one?

Ruth - We were more ourselves (I say frivolous) and less 'anarcho-punk', a term we had never defined ourselves as, being fiercely anti-label cos labels restrict... but which others were happy to give us to slot us in somewhere and try and make sense of us and their enjoyment of us...

Paul - The songs were a bit longer and more developed. Dunno if they were better though.

Lance - It's on Abstract Records (I think). What was that label all about? Why didn't you want to record for Mortarhate again?

Ruth - Colin ripped us off over a John Peel session pretending to be our manager and pocketing the proceedings so things got a bit 'estranged'. Abstract came forward, mostly cos of Mitch's love affair with the Mekons and the 3 Johns who were on said label...



Paul - Abstract were the label that The Three Johns were on, who were friends of Mitch, our bassist. The label was more of a regular sort of record label.

I could say lots about Mortarhate/ Conflict but it would all be libelous, certainly wouldn't look good in your book. Maybe you should ask Sean about this???

Lance - Both of your records charted in the indie charts. Was there any connection or attempt to connect with the pop bands of the time (Primitives etc.)?

Ruth - La la la la la la la la la la we're going to cra-a-ash - I think not! Perhaps they tried to connect with us to get some much-needed cred (the Primitives are an unfortunately example, as you might gather!).

Paul - This was quite a bit before the Primitives and we didn't relate to pop bands that well. We did not have any press agents, promotion or any of the usual music biz crap so in a way it was quite good to get in the alternative charts as it was then called. Fuckin' hate the word indie.

Lance - Who was the primary songwriter on "Funnery"? What were some of the lyrical ideas on that record?

Ruth - Oh god, those difficult who did what questions again. We all did - but Mitch did most of come into my soul including the stuff about the price of monogamy which had nothing to do with the rest of the song in my view and all to do with Mitch. Ideas - again, as per incident and situation - we were very immediate people - ouch I've stubbed my toe, I'll write a song!

Paul - Lyric-wise probably Chris and Ruth, though one song was Mitch's. Musically bits were from all of us. If I had to summarize HTW lyrics then I would have to say they tend to concerned themselves more with personal politics rather than singing about Smashing The System and all those other clichés. Songs would be about how people didn't have to live their lives doing boring jobs, that you didn't have to take what you were given in society, that there was a better life out there for you.

Lance - Why did the band finally split? Musical or personal reasons?

Ruth - We kept going for ages with different line up changes after Chris and Paul left to set up a new band with Chris's girlfriend - and it got to one line up change too many and we 'gave up ghost' as they say in the north. Could never ever find a good female drummer incidentally!

Lance - Why did you decide to go from Hagar The Womb to We Are Going To Eat You? What was the reason for the name change? Wasn't it the same basic line-up?

Paul - The band sort of split up. Some of us were disillusioned with the anarcho/punk scene which by this time had degenerated/ imploded somewhat.

Lance - What were some of the ideas with We Are Going To Eat You? How was it different from Hagar The Womb?

Paul - More songs and less thrash. The lyrics were more of a continuation of HTW-type ideas though over the next few years they got more abstract.

Lance - Is the name taken from the Hong Kong movie? Were you horror buffs or Hong Kong action buffs?

Paul - Yes, bloody hell, I think that you are only the second or third person ever to make the connection. True Story. We had our first gig booked at the Bull & Gate in Kentish Town. The promoter insisted that we had a name to put on the flyer for the gig. We had a band meeting and still struggled to think of a name. A compromise was reached in that we would have a temporary name just for the flyer for the first

gig. So that we could finish the meeting and go home somebody opened up a Scala Cinema guide of forthcoming films and we chose the name from the list almost at random. The first gig was pretty successful, got reviewed and people quite liked the name so it kind of stuck.... unfortunately.

Lance - Do you think that there was any political connection between the two bands? Were you at all part of the anarcho scene at that point?

Paul - Well in so much as the 4 WAGTEY people were all previously in HTW then much of the ideology was carried across, though it was not so obvious in the music.

By this time, 1986-7, I'm not sure how much of an anarcho scene there really was left, so I can't say if we were part of it. The scene had started to become a caricature of itself, bands "preaching to the converted", spouting what had become the same old clichés which to us was exactly the opposite of what punk was meant to be about.

Lance - How did you wind up recording for All The Madmen? Who was running the label at that point?

Paul - The anarcho connection again. It was good to be on the same label that the Mob used to be on, run at the time by Rob Chalice.

Lance - What was that first record like? Was it still along the lines of Hagar stuff?

Paul - No, not at all. As a complete reaction to the punky stuff, this record is quite poppy, even has jangly guitars on it too. WAGTEY singer Julie's vocal style was completely different from HTW, this wasn't a punk record.

Lance - I'll be honest, I had never heard of We Are Going To Eat You until a couple of months ago. Could you tell me a little about how the bands sound evolved over its existence?

Paul - Over a period of about 6 years the band's sound got heavier and harder, perhaps more rocky too. Always with elements of pop songs though, which maybe came from the punk idea, that the song was the most important thing.

Lance - How many records did you release and how many different labels did you deal with?

Paul - One 12" single with Cat and Mouse records, an album released by Big Cat records in the UK and by TVT records in the states and another single on Big Cat + TVT. There was 2 promo videos made, one of which was supposedly on heavy rotation on MTV.

Lance - What were the live gigs like? Was there any cross-over with the old anarcho crowd?

Paul - Certainly for the first few years we would see people we knew from HTW days at our gigs. We did play gigs with bands like Chumbawumba, who were seriously political at the time, Blythe Power and Thatcher On Acid. By '88- '89 though we were touring lots playing gigs at colleges, and more traditional venues too. We played some blindin' gigs at the Marquee and played at the Astoria a few times. We would play gigs with bands like Carter-The Unstoppable Sex Machine, The Mighty Lemon Drops and did a tour of big venues supporting The Godfathers.

Lance - Why did the band finally split? Musical or personal reasons?

Paul - Both, and contractual problems were a factor too.

Lance - How do you reflect back on the bands? What do you think you were trying to achieve?

Ruth - We never set off trying to achieve anything than show those meany boys at the anarchy centre (hello Bill now famous DJ, respect!) that we could do a gig with a weeks

notice - and we achieved that with lots of fumbling, mumbling and bribery and honestly never expected more. There was no game plan.

Jon - It was great at the time - partly the feeling of being involved in something, musically rather than politically on my part, and just enjoying playing in a band and going to loads of gigs, meeting people etc. There was also no great ambition that I remember - we were happy to do gigs and maybe release a tape or something but weren't bothered about big success.

Paul - Looking back I have mostly happy memories from the bands, I'm proud of all the records we made and the gigs we played. I hope people enjoyed seeing us and it would be nice to think that the songs meant something to some people. Originally I guess we just wanted to either make people think for themselves, live their own lives and most importantly, act as an inspiration; if Hagar could get up on stage and do it then so could anybody! Later with WAGTEY I just wanted to keep on playing and writing and be able to make a living out of doing so, just because I loved it so much.

Lance - Do you still have any connection to the ideas? Are there any elements of the anarcho scene that you maintain or was it all naïve to you?

Ruth - I think what we all went thru, listened to and did has left its mark on us, and that mark has been a positive benchmark for the future (or the now as I write). I may have been flippant about the time earlier in these questions but it's certainly influenced me and my outlook right up to now - though it's harder to say what was already there before the scene set in. The time also coincided with other notables such as the cant-pay-wont-pay campaigns, which weren't led by the anarcho movement but were definitely in keeping with the spirit of things as we saw them.

Paul - Some of the ideas were naïve, others very important. You can change your life for the better, we did. So in that way punk was empowering and really did change my life. The idea of being independent from the music biz in the way the anarcho scene was and is still vitally important to me.

Lance - What have you been doing musically or otherwise since?

Ruth - Working. I wouldn't recommend it. Musically - keeping well away from a mic, going to gigs, clubbing and buying records - a blameless life really (apart from working). Oh, and now I'm expecting a little ruthless at the ripe old age of 38 (ahhhhh) xxx

Paul - After leaving Wagtey I engineered at Southern Studios for a couple of years. I loved doing this and working with other bands on their music.

Eventually I wanted to make my own music again and for the last 8 years I've been making lots of hard trance and techno records. I still run some record labels with Chris who was in Hagar/Wagtey. For us the dance music explosion was just like punk with a different beat. So the old ideas move forwards and onwards. Once again it was all about ideas not musical proficiency; only this time with samplers not guitars (surely samplers are The punk rock instrument of all time if only they had been invented 10 years earlier?). By the early/ mid 1990's the most political act of protest that there could be was to have a large Free Party, politics and music had come together again. Many of the people on the Free Party scene were those originally from the anarcho crowd. Instead of putting on a punk-rock gig

they were now organizing a dance party in a disused warehouse or field somewhere. Laws were passed to try to ban these parties. The protests against them causing major rioting in London.

With dance records you can be quite anonymous (another old anarcho idea!) and release records under lots of different artist names; so I've either made or released about a hundred times the records I did when I played in bands.

Lance - What are some of your best memories of those days?

Jon - I just remember it all being good fun at the time - there used to be up to 10 or so of us would go to the A centre from Hornchurch every week which was good - that's where I got my alternative name (Jon from Bromley) on one of those trips nothing really sticks in my mind as being really special above everything else though I remember playing my last (official) gig with the band at the Brixton Ace and the stage getting invaded.

**You were nurtured in a
cardboard theatre
A great platform of parental
care
Mummy and Daddy your
central props
Waiting for the day their
wisdom would be shared
They supported you their
only "puppet"
Pulled your strings to suit
their way
Until one time on that
stage
You found you could re-
peat what they did say
In a cardboard theatre lies
all decadent imagery
In a cardboard theatre
there exists no liberty**

REVIEWS

MUSIC

7 SECONDS "Skins, Brains And Guts" 7"

7 SECONDS "Committed For Life" 7"

7 SECONDS "The Crew" LP

7 SECONDS "Walk Together, Rock Together" 12"

7 SECONDS "Blast From The Past" 7"

7 SECONDS "New Wind" LP

They were the fucking shit for a while. I loved this band. I remember getting that first EP when I was still ordering everything that AT was putting out. It was cool. "Racism Sucks"? Totally. "I Hate Sports"? I can see your point. "We're Gonna Fight"? The fucking hit! Songs about fighting in early hardcore to me was the same as songs about sniffing glue in early punk songs. It was just imagery. We weren't gonna really fight anyone OR sniff glue.

"Committed For Life" is what really got me hooked. Minor Threat weren't putting out records fast enough and while 7 Seconds were wearing their influences on their sleeve, this was a great little EP. I guess it's part of the ill-fated debut album that was a little too rough. I can see how an album worth of this type of recording could suck. But for an EP, it's great especially with the title song and the amazing "The Pit". I loved the juxtaposition of the really raw DC style hardcore with Kevin's melodic tenor. I love hardcore bands that can do that and this record was the start. Sluggo did it. Life Sentence could do it at times. Sin Dios even.

So I was psyched when "The Crew" came out. I remember seeing those awesome photos of them playing in San Diego in Leading Edge fanzine and thinking that it must have been the coolest basement show in the world. Fuck, this album still sounds great to me. Meat and potatoes drumming, with the kind of vocals that every band should strive for. You know, with all the straight edge bands to come since 7 Seconds, nobody has really come close to Kevin's style. Verbal Assault had moments as did Sluggo. But this is the ultimate singalong hardcore record. "This Is The Angry Pt. 2" is a genius reworking of the happy slop on the second EP.

7 Seconds recording with Ian? Holy shit! This record freaked me the fuck out even if the guitars come in wrong on the title track. Everyone just talks about the title track and the Nena cover. But what about "Strength"? Fucking amazing song. Plus, the Walsby cover art is excellent. With everyone complaining about Inner Ear's poor drum sounds, this is still the best 7 Seconds recording. When they reissued this as a 12" you got some half-assed live stuff plus the two amazing tracks from "Cleanse The Bacteria". I prefer the original artwork but you really need "Regress No Way".

I don't remember the whole story behind "Blast From The Past". I think it was to help get the band's label, Positive Force, rolling. It's more of those raw recordings from the unreleased album. It's pretty solid hardcore with a funny cover of Sham 69's "If The Kids Are United".

I remember around this time getting a 7 Seconds tour video. It seemed like it was 10 hours long, but I loved it. It was the band on tour after "Walk Together" and it ends with them recording in DC with Ian again. This time, they only get a few

songs done. But they're the highlights of "New Wind". I wasn't a huge fan of that record although I still saw them everytime they came to Fender's at that time. The title track and "Still Believe" are as good as anything on "Walk Together". I'm a sucker for "Tied Up In Rhythm" too.

(Alternative Tentacles, BYO Records, Positive Force)

A STATE OF MIND / CHUMBAWAMBA split 7"

For a long time, this record was the template for me. It was catchy punk with a heavy anarcho slant with beautiful packaging that was unlike what most punk looked like at the time. The fact that both were exciting up-and-coming bands made the record seem sort of urgent. It was one of those records you thought was going to be historic.

It turns out that it was mostly forgotten. A State Of Mind only ever got it together to do one more record. Chumbawamba took a different musical path and became superstars. This little split record quickly became a fossil.

But it's great. With the original versions of "Invasion" and "Isolation", Chumbawamba turn in two of their best songs. Fast, guitar pop with rudimentary versions of those vocal harmonies that are their signature. Reflecting what they were doing on their early demo tapes, the recording quality is much better.

A State Of Mind were Bay Area peace punks though not so much of the Crucifix / COP variety. Like Chumbawamba, they weren't so much thrashy and even tried their hand at vocal harmonies. In some ways they were more like Flipper or even Proletariat.

Despite everything, this record has something of a cult appeal though the collector scum have mostly ignored it. I'm kinda surprised none of this stuff ever made it to disc. (Agit-Matter Records)

ADOLESCENTS, THE "s/t" LP

Punks have no imagination. To this day, everyone still calls this "the blue album". What the hell? I remember reading their interviews in Flipside, probably the issue that came with the first "Rodney on the ROQ" comp. I remember thinking they were the real deal. Back in those days, I was so desperate for punk I would often wind up with records that at least looked punk but ended up being some shitty new wave or worse. But the Adolescents were definitely the real deal. I remember I couldn't tell if they were scary punks or just a bunch of assholes like the military brats that made up most of Hawaii's half-assed punk scene.

This record was a real revelation. "Kids Of The Blackhole" is an epic about a punk house that seemed to bring all my fantasies into reality. Was this for real? I had to believe it was true. Plus it's a wonderful song. Rikk Agnew is a totally underrated guitar player. At the time we all knew he was the shit. I followed him from the Adolescents to Christian Death to his time with DI. But he's largely forgotten today. People say nice things about the Adolescents and this record. But nobody remembers how important that dude was. Now a lot of this sort of playing is common especially in some of the commercial punk bands. But this record is the first time most of us heard it.

It's a great album. I don't have to tell you all the hits. "Wrecking Crew", "Who Is Who", "LA Girl", "No Way" and even fucking "Amoeba" sound great today. Sounds like the fucking theme from "Buffy"!
(Frontier Records)

ADULT NET, THE "Incense And Peppermint" 12"
Some people think Brix ruined the Fall. I think that's a bunch of bullshit. It's the fucking Yoko syndrome crap when the worshippers can't stand anyone else getting close and humanizing their deities. Songs like "L.A." and "Cruiser's Creek"? They're as good as "Kicker Conspiracy" or "Totally Wired". The band was changing. It's what bands do (usually). Don't blame the girlfriend. You don't know what you're talking about.

I like that period of the Fall, so I was excited when this 12" of Brix's other band showed up at Texas Records in Santa Monica. Here's another example of how uncool I am: this was the first version of "Incense And Peppermint" I had ever heard. I loved it of course. Now I love the Strawberry Alarm Clock too. But I still have a place in my heart for the Adult Net version, as it was first for me. This 12" might be the only thing the band really had in them. I like all three songs. But I've never made it through anything else of theirs. I may just need more patience, as this is a fun little record to me.
(Beggars Banquet)

AKUTT INNLEGGELSE "Echoes From The Asylum" 7"
AKUTT INNLEGGELSE demo

Here's another band that nobody gave a shit about back in the day. Now people are starting to come around. Norway's "Acute Admission" were an unusual punk band but perfect for the archaeologist punks trying to uncover forgotten gems from that largely unscathed hardcore era of the early '80s.

Before recording a demo, the band released a wonderfully primitive three song EP. It sounds like a garage recording and the vocals are similar to a young CCM in many ways. "CIA - KGB" is a great chanted riff while "Superstjerne" is more typically punk with shitty guitar solo and everything. Shit, these kids were 13 when they recorded this.

Man, I loved these guys. I remember getting this tape and just staring at the cover all the time. It was a wall of skulls and to my sixteen-year-old mind it was a trip. In one short year, the band had progressed hugely largely due to the singers voice finally breaking so he didn't sound like a little kid anymore and more like a super fucked Pere Ubu. The songs are also a lot faster and tighter. Fast is a cheap and easy way to cover your tracks if you have trouble sounding tight. I remember as a kid thinking that there was something really strange about this recording that I couldn't put my finger on. You know when you hear something and you just instinctively know something odd is going on but you can't actually isolate one sound or instrument as being the source? That's the same with this recording. Years later, I realize that the PA is feeding back while they're playing and they didn't really bother to stop and fix it.

The band would go on to appear on several amazing compilations like ROIR's "World Class Punk", "Cleanse The Bacteria" and a couple of the BCT comps. But they never recorded another tape or record.

ARMY OF JESUS "Prosperity Health Finance Wealth" 7"

I doubt that's really what they call this record, but it's the closest thing to a title I could come up with. Well, the band that used to be the new kids on the block here in Austintatious, strike back with a

second record in one year. There's even a third one coming. That makes them more prolific than J Church, Storm The Tower and Signal Lost combined! It's time for the other Austin bands to start getting their shit together!

Army O' Jesus! What's not to love? I love this record. In fact, despite the short time span, it's actually a lot better than their excellent debut. It's fast. It's tight. There's a more interesting rhythmic structure to the vocals. Plus, they've got my favorite song of theirs here: "Self Help". I dunno. That song just has a groove. It swings. Fuck, I don't know what I'm talking about. It's a great song. One of those classic moments in hardcore like when Government Issue discovered open chords, right?

Did you know that drummer Matt is also a great guitarist? Did you know that guitarist Hans is also a drummer and has a one man band? Fuck those guys, right? I hate people that inherently can do anything. I feel like a someplace lower on the evolutionary chart.

They got the covers all nice and silk-screened but, hey, this ain't no emo shitburger. There's that indefinable classic punk aesthetic at work here all the way down to the crooked ass (but cool) insert. It's cool even if they did steal the song title "East of 35" from me.
(bsdrecords@gmail.com)

AS MERCENARIAS "The Beginning Of The End Of The World" LP
Soul Jazz is in many ways the coolest record label going. They're like a cross between the Secret Museum of Mankind and Actual. Does that make sense? Not really. But they've been releasing and reissuing some of the best deep jazz, soul and funky rhythms all looking beautiful.

Lately, they've been giving their polish to the post punk world starting with the incredible "The Sexual Life Of Savages" double LP compilation. Now they've release this incredible collection of recordings from Brazil's answer to the Slits, As Mercenarias.

Everyone knows about the old hardcore scene of bands like Ratos De Porao and Colera. But conjunctively, there was an avant-garde in Brazil's '80s. From 1982 to 1988, As Mercenarias were one of the top bands. With their fusion of punk rock, miraculous funky bass lines and a guitar sound that could go from soulful to white noise at the drop of a hat, the band actually had a certain degree of success back in the day.

This record collects all the music from their two albums. The recordings are fantastic. The delivery is aggressive. Some of the dub moments have more to do with PiL or even Pigbag than the Slits. The comparison has a lot more to do with them being an all female quartet. It's a little more expensive, but you should really track down the vinyl which includes a bonus 7" of the groups demo recordings.
(Soul Jazz)

BEATLES, THE "Let It Be... Naked" LP

I always liked this record. Not only am I one of those people that prefers the later Beatles stuff, I'm the guy that likes their most fucked up records. Fuckin' McCartney, y'know? I can't even look at photos of that guy. He seems like such a fuckin' phoney. But I loved the others especially John. "I Dig A Pony" is one of their best songs as far as I'm concerned. "Across The Universe"! George's tunes are also fucking brilliant especially the haunting "I Me Mine".

These recently cleaned up recordings are fucking fantastic. I think Spector is an overrated fucker who had his moment and otherwise fucked up the Beatles and the Ramones. Even silly Paul songs like "The Long And Winding Road" are more enjoyable especially when you hear Preston's electric piano.

(Capitol Records)

BEATLES, THE – "The White Album demos" 2xLP

As I've said before, I'm a later period Beatles guy. I like the early stuff somewhat. But it's "Rubber Soul" and beyond that get me going. I guess it's not really too surprising that "The White Album" is my favorite Beatles record. There's something mysterious about it that always sort of frightened me as a child and that's even before I was aware of the Manson interpretation. It's one of those records I am attracted to that feel like a weird insight into a scary and alien lifestyle.

So this crazy boot takes the fear another step further. Even odder versions of the songs or do they just seem odd because I'm so familiar with the official versions? I don't know. A lot of this is acoustic Lennon with mysterious versions of "Everybody's Got Something To Hide Except For Me And My Monkey", "The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill" and yet another version of "Revolution". Lots of cool unreleased stuff too like "Child Of Nature" and "What's The New Mary Jane". I mean, they've been bootcd before (is there anything from Beatles archive not raided?) but it's nice to see all the '68 stuff in one place.

The George tracks are really incredible as well with the eerie "Circles" and "Not Guilty". I even dig Paul's song "Junk". The record ends with a weird grouping of "Dear Prudence", "Sexy Sadie" and "Helter Skelter".
(no address)

BRAIN HANDLE "s/t" EP

First of all, what a great looking record. It's cool and it's punk without looking like your stereotypical hardcore 7". They get the feel of it, which is most important.

They get it musically too. Three great hardcore tracks on the first side. At times, the melodic guitar lines and intense (but not screamed) vocals bring to mind early Articles of Faith and Neon Christ. Other times it's the more straightforward attack of groups like N.O.T.A. or even the Adolescents. Side two is filled with one, long, and painful number that is more reminiscent of one of the slower songs off "The Kids Will Have Their Say". It's a great transition for the band. I can't wait to hear what they do next.

(Brain Handle, PO Box 10223, Pittsburgh, PA 15232)

CHASED AND SMASHED "30 Seconds Over Hillsboro" 12"

I'm a moron. I didn't even know that Erin Yanke was the drummer for this group. This is probably the punkest thing that Paul has put out, and it's pretty mental. Eight fast and furious garage blasts that remind me a bit of Gaunt and Teengenerate. Belted vocals sound like they're spitting out lines between trips to the vomitorium. It's real rough, but the songs have a tight structure and rhythm that make the songs, I dunno, they're sort of pop songs in a gargling-with-whisky sort of way.

The first track is my favorite. I love those "fuck my hometown" anthems ever since the first time I heard "At The Edge" by SLF and "A River Runs Through It" is in that same tradition. "So what if a river runs though it? You can hang yourself from the highest bridge. Go 'head and do it!" Yeah!

(Onion Flavored Records)

DOOMED, THE "Live at Reading 27/07/78"

DOOMED, THE "R.C.A. 1978"

DAMNED, THE "Live at the Whiskey 07/09/79"

As the story goes, the Damned split after "Music For Pleasure" came out which was both a critical and commercial disaster. Rat Scabies quit the band and attempted suicide. Eventually Brian James quit as well. Soon after, the band regrouped sans James and Lu with Captain Sensible moving over to guitar and a slew of bass players sitting in including Lemmy from Motorhead, Henry Badowski of Chelsea and eventually Algy Ward of the Saints.

"Live at Reading" is a 10 song recording of the Badowski version of the group. The audience recording is pretty rough, but it's a great way to hear rudimentary versions of "Anti-Pope" and "Second Time Around". Not quite the breakneck speeds of "Machine Gun Etiquette". Instead you get some great punk rock. The set opens with their great rendition of "Teenage Dream", the great punk hit that never was. I don't know who the White Cats were but I wonder what their other songs were like. Great renditions "Problem Child" and "New Rose" plus some cool covers here including Pink Floyd's "Arnold Layne" of all things.

I'm not totally sure who is playing bass on "R.C.A." but it's a pretty good sounding live record. You get another great version of "Teenage Dream" this time better sounding despite the slight fading in and out during the second verse. This isn't a fantastic sounding recording. But the vocals are so clear it almost seems like a board recording. Even the bass sounds great. There's a great version of "Problem Child" with Vanian really pushing his voice. "Looking At You" is great too.

This live set from the Damned was part of their comeback. Having regained the name and with "Machine Gun Etiquette" just around the corner, the band are at their most chaotic. Clearly wasted, they keep goading the crowd with the sarcastic ("I heard Tom Verlaine played on this stage once. God, I'm impressed.") to the constant barrage of "fuck off and die". The kind of antics you would later expect from the Replacements were in full effect including spontaneous, crap covers like "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy" and changing the words from "Ballroom Blitz" to "Great Big Tits". It's a raucous audience recording that still seems powerful propelled by one of the group's best rhythm sections of Scabies and Ward.

These records are basically everything you would want from bootlegs of the Doomed/Damned. This is was one of their greatest periods just before "Machine Gun Etiquette" put them back on the map. They were fierce and crazy live. It's a great chance to see the raw energy that spawned that fantastic third studio album.

EXECUTE '82 demo

EXECUTE flexi

EXECUTE "Hardcore Temptation" 7"

EXECUTE "Criminal Flowers" 7"

EXECUTE "An Omen Of Fear" 7"

I used to love Japanese hardcore. I'm from Hawaii, so Japanese cultural is everywhere. I remember looking through some big Japanese glossy fashion mag. It had a spread on punk with amazing photos of punk kids all done up wearing GISM shirts and crazy safety pins. It was a huge turn on. I was really hooked.

Nowadays everyone who is fascinated with old school Japanese hardcore mostly think of GISM and Gauze and not much else. I like those bands. But they were never near the top of my list. The Execute, Stalin, Confuse, these were the bands that I really loved. Nowadays nobody remembers The Execute and it's a shame.

The band came out punching with a live recording in 1982 released as a demo tape. It's a muddy sound but it's big. It's not your typical demo as they're pretty tight and sound like a band ready to record. The tape is really worth hunting down for people who dig the band, as only three of the eight tracks were ever re-recorded for subsequent vinyl releases. The tracks did find their way onto one of the

Execute LP singles collections.

The group's debut flexi is the band at their rawest. The singer belts it out like he's been gargling glass. It's actually quite reminiscent of the old LA peace punk band Iconoclast. Even the guitar sound is similarly riffy without getting too metal. Highlights are definitely "Answer" and "Peace, Japan" (though the demo version is also great).

From Pushead on down, people think of the "Hardcore Temptation" EP as being the quintessential Execute document. It's a fantastic hardcore record. The vocals are as good as ever. The production is good but avoids '80s trappings. The real breakthrough is the additional guitar work that while maybe trying to be metal, is more harmonically driven. And it's not overloaded with solos. "Final Attack" is a classic and blows away the version that appears on the "P.E.A.C.E." comp. When you consider what else was coming out in 1983, it was easy to see how this might seem like the most brutal record on the face of the planet. In the pre-E.N.T./Concrete Sox/Hersey world, this was shocking hardcore.

"Criminal Flowers" is the group's attempt to branch out a little. I guess in some ways the intro to the title track should have been an indication that by the end of their run they would be doing goth shit like "The Antagonistic Shadow". Yeah, that singing is kind of weird on the title track. But the band redeem themselves on "Slash" and "Moron" turning in two of their best thrash tracks. Even the fucking fade-in on the "Moron", which I usually hate, works.

The group's final EP was 1986's "An Omen Of Fear". A lot of people were slagging off bands like The Execute for getting too metal. It's funny because if we all knew then what we know now about how metal was going to totally poison the scene in much bigger ways than a few extra guitar solos, we would still be embracing the Execute and going after the real crossover bullshit. This record is for the most part straight hardcore with a few metal guitar parts. But the production is raw and avoids most of the drum and vocal polish that for me really marks the worst aesthetic elements of crossover metal. I don't know. Maybe they wanted "Your Eyes" to sound like Maiden but just couldn't get there. It's better this way, that's for sure. At any rate, the band seemed to have run their course by this time. Hardcore groups aren't really meant to progress and therefore, they're not really meant to last. That's okay. DC was one of the only scenes to realize this.

Two other tracks well worth mentioning are "Sag" and "The Voice" from the "Great Punk Hits" compilation. The recording feels like it fits somewhere between the flexi and "Hardcore Temptation".

GIBBONS, THE "Hope, Inc" LP

I'd never actually heard of this band until this record showed up at practice one day. Don't be afraid of the very nice but suspiciously emo looking cover art. It's cool. It's not what you think.

The Gibbons are a great punk band that seems to be part of this new generation that includes the Ergs and Sexy as groups that either know and respect the past or are totally oblivious and stumbled onto something really magical. Just when you think they're really into Leatherface, they throw you a curve ball. Maybe they were actually listening to Moving Targets back when I was? Maybe they were into the Feelies? It's really hard to say. There's this musicality about this record that says they can instinctively find melody without reducing speed or power.

The guitars have that sound that is so indicative of American punk after 1980. It's that wide wash of folk chords played with a wash of distortion. The melodies and harmonies unique to these chords are implied more often than emphasized. It's sort of pretty but still sort of punk. I don't know what to call this stuff. Can you really call "Flip Your Wig" a punk record? I don't know if you can. But it's great and The Gibbons are mining in that area. (grateful...)

MOB 47 "Karnvapen Attack" EP

MOB 47 "Racist Regime" LP

I got to know Mob 47 from the "P.E.A.C.E." comp. They were one of the bands that really stood out for me and I wrote to them. I had this weird fear that "Karnvapen Attack" was their "hit" and the rest of their set might be throwaway stuff. I was really happy to find out that the first EP was totally solid. Every song had distinction even if it took little start/stop gimmicks. I had never heard a record that sounded like it was cheaply recorded, but you could still weirdly hear everything clearly. It was a different way of looking records. You didn't have to hear every instrument all the time. Sometimes bass or drums are just implied. This record like some of the other early European hardcore records were great contributions to our way of looking at cheap recordings.

If the nine song EP seemed like a lot of music crammed onto a little piece of vinyl, "Racist Regime" was an opus. The 20 song bootleg is a non-stop barrage that pieces together several different recordings mostly from the groups 1986 demo and 1983 "Hardcore Attack" demo though neither is featured in complete. While the 1986 final demo is crisp and clean and totally proficient, it lacks the energy and ultimately the distorted noise of the '83 material. This material is closest to that of the EP and is perfect for anyone wanting more of the same. Another bonus of the early group versus the later group is it seems like only a young punk band would write a song like "Fuck Bowie".

MUSTAFA ET MONIQUE "The Houdini Aubergine" 10"

I remember reading about Sonic Youth long before I heard them for the first time. The reviews were always so vague but totally intriguing. There was beautiful music confused by layers of noise and electronic distortion. I learned to love Sonic Youth even though they couldn't possibly sound like the music in my head I was imagining.

Mustafa Et Monique are that group. This record is sort of a miracle. I never would have even given it a second thought with it's almost Pavement-y record cover. But Sean sent it my way and he's usually right. If Jesus and Mary Chain really, really did hate rock n roll like they claimed, they might be heading into this territory. There is all manner of static and feedback making noise that is almost nostalgic at times like overworked '50s appliances. Mix that with the sweet Velvet-y tunes and you get the idea.

Whether or not the duos record collection goes back to My Bloody Valentine or Sonic Youth or the Velvet Underground, they've found that use of noise that is self-conscious rather than a weapon. Unlike many bands that use feedback and distortion as a weapon attacking the music, for Mustafa Et Monique it is more like the bangs they hide their eyes behind.

(Oscillatone Recordings)

PEDESTRIANS, THE "Future Shock" LP

Yeah, I know we all think girly girl is really cool and Jordan is a hilarious drunk and they're all nice guys. That doesn't mean they know how to make a great album, right? Nice guys finish last, okay?

Why are you even reading this review? If you follow J Church stuff, you probably already own and love this amazing record. If you know anything about me, you know I love this band. God, you're still reading this! Why? You know you love it.

Okay, so you know I'm pals with the Peds (as I like to call them [I've actually never ever called them that]). You also may have guessed that I think this is a truly fantastic punk record that takes me back to a simpler time. It's cool. But in the interest of fair play in journalism, I'm gonna try to think of every thing I don't like about this record.

Number 1, no mylar bag? What's that all about? Punk vinyl is supposed to come in a plastic bag. It makes it instantly look vintage! You always make sure your 7" has a small hole and you always make

sure you have the plastic bag with no lip. It's standard punker practice!

Number 2, fuck yellow, right? I am so mad at that color. Did you know that we did a whole gross of yellow J Church shirts for our tour with Storm the Tower and DFI? Yeah, kids weren't that psyched for the yellow shirt. Now that color when associated with punk just brings back sour memories.

Number 3, oh, I don't know. It's too short. I mean, it's not too short. It's perfect. But it leaves you wanting more. But that can be a positive thing.

I can't trash this record. I love it. Go buy it.
(residuerecords@gmail.com)

SIGNAL LOST "You'll Never Get Us Down Again" 7"

I feel like I've totally lost all perspective with Signal Lost. I don't think there's a band I've seen more since moving to Austin. I love 'em. They're a big part of why this city has such a cool punkasaurus scene. But they're my pals too and I dig 'em. They're Liberty's favorite local band. So I don't really know how to talk about them. I don't know exactly how to describe their sound. Do they really sound like Post-Regiment? I dunno. Not really.

Two years after their great first LP, these fuckers finally got their shit together and came up with this little four-song EP. Four songs in two years? Prolific they're not. But it's worth the wait and really interesting to compare the two records. Signal Lost have moved away from the more "straight" sound that perhaps was more in line with groups like La Fraction. Now there is a lot more attack in the sound. You almost wanna say Nausea (who I love, love, loved even after they stayed at my house for a week and ate all my food). But if I were to really nerd out, they are more like Insurgence with Ashley's tone more in the Alicia Non Grata zone (pre-13 of course).

Stan is a really underrated guitar player and he is a lot of why this band is so great. They could easily go all chugga-chugga or jug-jug or whatever big-balls guitar sound the closet metalhead crusties are trying to currently reinvent. Instead he plays with brighter tones, open chording and interwoven picking. It's got more to do with AOF than anything else.

Even the cover art is really weird and different. It's cool.
(www.prankrecords.com)

TOBEY, ERIN "s/t" CD

Oh, Plan-It-X, the less I understand, the more I am intrigued. Erin Tobey is great. Nice too. I got to see her perform at the Fest last year in Gainesville and I was dead into it. How does she do that trick where she reaches over the neck of the guitar for a solitary note? How do you think of stuff like that? It's great.

A new barrage of sorta sad bastard tunes that make a really sad bastard take notice... It's pretty stuff with abstraction and nuance. But it's also all the standard stuff you would expect from the "solo artist" or "singer-songwriter" or whatever horrible label you wanna stick on the poor girl. As a result, "Secret Letters" is simultaneously the corniest song and my favorite on the record...

It's self-conscious and it's deep. But it's not too much of either. It's revealing but entertaining. Is this what the whole Plan-It-X thing is all about. Okay, I'm in.
(www.plan-it-x.com)

ZOUNDS "Go All The Way" EP

No, the first (and possibly only) offering from the restoration version of Zounds is not a tribute to Eric Carmen and the Raspberries. This self-released EP is what's left of from what I understand was a full-length LP session. For what-

ever reason, the band weren't too happy with the results and only these three songs are coming out.

I have to say that I really like this little trio of tunes and it makes me really wanna hear what the rest of the recordings are like. It's not typical Zounds. The band is different. Drummer Stick is more known for his work in groups like Doom and E.N.T. Bassist Protag is more known as the Mob's driver. The group has a much heavier sound with bigger sounding guitars and more "punk" sounding drums. In some ways it's more straightforward than the old stuff.

But the vocals and tunefulness is still there and that's what reminds you that you could only be listening to Steve Lake. The songs are three bitter songs about the war and US manipulation. It's great to hear a perspective from someone in the UK that doesn't just feel anti-American, but feels like their government was manipulated by ours.

C'mon guys! Don't split. Get that album to sound how you like and get those songs out!
(Zounds)

FILM

BATTLE IN HEAVEN (dir. by Carlos Reygadas)

"Battle In Heaven" is easily the most thought-provoking and beautiful films I've seen this year. At the end of this film I felt like I was the target audience absolute. I was moved and thrilled. But the more I know about myself, it seemed obvious that this film was doomed.

There's not much plot to this film (not unlike Reygadas' brilliant "Japon") but the plot is less than secondary. It's the story of a man, the degradations he faces in life, the good and bad choices he makes and what he believes could be his redemption. But within that, more and more questions come to mind and like any great film, as much as you are excited by the work, you are challenged and in some ways intimidated.

Especially in America, the collective unconscious has given us all this false self-image of positivism. We believe a lie about ourselves and our potential and what those things mean. So for a US audience to relate to Marcos, the main character and true anti-hero, there would take some self-evaluation that burger eating, video gaming, cell phoners just aren't ready for.

Marcos is an overweight middle-aged man. His life is split between the reality of his poverty and the unreality that his job shows him. As the driver for a Mexican general, his main job is chauffeuring around Ana. The general's daughter, she lives and affluent and privileged life that is juxtaposed by her own which is her secret life working at a high priced brothel. As driver, Marcos is the only one that knows of her double life. His taste of that decadent life, that he can't escape, comes mostly from hanging around the brothel and fucking Ana on occasion. In fact, the only reliable moment of hope in the film is an oddly poetic scene with the two post-coital in bed, the camera focused on their genitals as he slowly loses his erection.

Reygadas isn't afraid to make that the central metaphor of

the film. In his life of poverty, Marcos and his wife have kidnapped a baby. But the crime is bungled and the baby dies. The actual crime isn't at all relevant to the film. Rather it's the circumstances it creates where Marcos has to decide what choices can be made in his now accelerated bleak life.

There's been a lot of hoopla about the graphic sex in this film. It's all quite beautiful. All of the actors are non-professional which is great for many reasons. First of all, it gives the film a sort of Jarmusch type of realism that I'm addicted to. But also, the sex scenes are unlike anything you will see in an American film... even films by Larry Clark or Vincent Gallo. All of the sex scenes are amazing looking and, like a lot of the film, very dreamlike.

It's a great film. It might be my film of the year. But it's not for everyone. The sex is graphic. It's not Breillat. Well, maybe a little. But if you can hang, it's an amazing challenge. (Tartan Video)

CHAIN CAMERA (dir. by Kirby Dick)

DERRIDA (dir. by Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering Kofman)

SICK: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF BOB FLANAGAN, SUPERMASOCHIST (dir. by Kirby Dick)

With the recent DVD release of "Chain Camera", it's possible to look at three consecutive documentaries by Kirby Dick and get a better picture of what he's really been up to. With his most famous movies being about Derrida and Flanagan, there's an assumption that he's some sort of NYU film school trash or another shock schlock voyeur. He's really neither.

"Sick: The Life And Death Of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist" came out in '97 and is the title that most put Kirby Dick on the map. The world of documentary film making, while booming in recent years, is still brilliantly ignored enough by the American public to practically qualify it as underground filmmaking. As a result, it's possible to make a poignant film about performance artist Flanagan with the same panache and caliber as any of Ken Burns's *McMentaries*. It's wonderful because few people deserved this kind of tribute more than Flanagan and Dick seemed to understand that.

Flanagan was mostly known to America as a masochistic freak who would hammer nails through his cock and lie on a bed of sharp nails piercing his skin. The American public only wants quick answers. It's a nation of cliff notes and our whole identity has been reduced to, at best, a 90-minute infomercial. "Sick" doesn't avoid the shocking nature of the performance art. It just doesn't make it a priority.

Flanagan was born with the disease that killed him. Though a lot of people thought he was a junkie or something because of his demeanor, he suffered from cystic fibrosis and that was ultimately the basis for his art and masochistic lifestyle. As a child, he was often tied down to his crib as not to hurt himself. The illness also gave him excruciating stomachaches and the only cure he found was to hold his penis. Sexuality and discipline were more profound in his life like a Foucault-een archetype.

In the final decade and a half of his life he signed a contract with Sheree Rose. As his mistress, she was given total control over his body. She became his collaborator in his performance art, which seems like the perfecting of art as life and not entertainment. Observing their relationship and focusing on key moments in Flanagan's early life, Dick manages to paint a challenging but sympathetic portrait. The perceived violence in their relationship has more to do with language than any type of deviance. They speak and communicate differently from normal America. But they are ultimately a

loving couple facing his impending death humanly and as best they can.

If there was any question about Dick's understanding of this sort of non-existential though universal suffering, it was put in plain sight with "Chain Camera". In a neo-Warhol-ian gesture, the director supplied ten cameras to a number of kids at a Los Angeles high school. Each kid was given a week to record something of a diary. In the end, the best moments were edited together forming this surprisingly powerful film.

Oh God, this movie is why I hate fucking shit like "Laguna Beach". Man, fuck that weak shit! It's not enough that MTV ruins music, now they've gotta ruin what it is to actually be a teenager. "Laguna Beach" makes me wanna go Columbine.

"Chain Camera" is the complete opposite. Following a diverse bunch of kids, you get a painfully candid look at what kids are thinking. I found it to be totally surprising at times. I know I'm just some old guy now, but I was surprised that I came away thinking that, really, all of these kids are pretty smart. Even the ones who are fucked up (the girl whose life dream is to be a stripper, the kid who thinks all non-Mathletes are worthless, etc.) are just a little confused.

It's fascinating to hear frank discussions on race and sexuality from normal kids. Nobody is posturing in this film. There's an amazing discussion between a girl who was actually from Ethiopia and other African-American students on racism and their own racism. One obviously gay teen has a open and playful discussion about his sexual exploits and interests with his close friends, all of whom are straight. The lesbian couple isn't even concerned about gender politics anymore. They can now have the same concerns as any couple; the future, moving out, college.

One of the most moving sequences involves a kid who had to move to LA to get away from the gang violence around his home in Chicago. He misses both of his parents who are divorced, he's having girlfriend trouble, and it all becomes too much when he starts to talk about how he couldn't play football because his grades were too poor. To express his feelings, he starts to sing a painfully off-key rendition of "I Believe I Can Fly" by R. Kelly. It's that painful confluence of an otherwise hilarious situation with a broader painful realization that reminds you of Jennifer Jason Leigh singing Van Morrison in "Georgia".

Almost like some corny ending, the film concludes with the prom. It's sort of cathartic to see these kids finally letting loose and not just digging into their deepest darkest corners. But even there, you get some real unguarded dialog.

HABIT (dir. by Larry Fessenden)

I don't know if it's because a few fairly mediocre actors surround him, but Larry Fessenden is really good in this. Man, I was really blown away by this movie.

It's been said so often that it's sort of corny. But this is like a Cassavettes type of take on the vampire story, which in itself is something opposite of his ethic. But imagine the street, uh, "realism" of something like "Shadows" but used for a pretty well written horror movie.

"Habit" is the story of Sam, his father recently died, his long-term girlfriend just moved out and he's got this on again, off again bender. It's Halloween and he's heading to a party thrown by his best friends Nick and Rae. There he meets Anna who is fascinated with him and essentially picks him up. The two leave together only to be separated when Sam realizes that he has drunkenly grabbed the wrong coat. They mysteriously meet again at a street fair and their affair begins.

Sam begins to physically fall apart and with the kinky blood play,

both he and the viewer start to get suspicions that Anna may be a vampire.

What's great about this movie is that it's still a great indie drama even if you took out the vampire element. It's a beautiful looking film. When they are on the streets of New York it really looks like New York. The Halloween party really looks like a party I'd go to. It seems very real. It's also got some good dialog, and like I said, Fessenden can act. So can some of the others around him. When he starts to consider Anna being a vampire, it's as shocking to him as it is to us. Sam is so real as a character that even he knows how preposterous the accusation is.

For me that complication and the ways the director overcomes them is what makes this movie outstanding. It's certainly not like any other horror movie I can think of. It's smart and avoids all the fantasy that people assume are imperative to the genre.

(Fox Lorber)

MA MERE (dir. by Christophe Honoré)

Paris! Revolution, art and cinema... and not necessarily in that order. The reinvention of their cinema is art and is nothing short of the revolution. This latest daring feature for the near perfect Isabelle Huppert is proof positive. This modern version of Bataille's post-Oedipal psychodrama is not merely another piece of shocking French cinema. It's an attempt to find the philosophical roots.

Helene and Pierre are mother and son. Abandoned on the Canary Islands, their affluence becomes the metaphor as boredom leads to sexual curiosity, though not with each other. In fact, it would appear that Helene has had the head start. With her husband having essentially isolated her on the island while he's gone off for work, she becomes involved in the island's notoriously debauched nightlife.

As this becomes slowly revealed to Pierre, his own rite of passage becomes confused in Helene's confused desire to be mother and free spirit. As some sort of misplaced compromise, she asks her young lesbian mistress, Rea, plaything to sexually educate her son. While watching voyeuristically from a distance, she sees Rea strip and fuck Pierre in an open public breezeway.

From their the story becomes a complicated meditation on power and death with Helene slowly removing herself from the story preceding her own suicide. Another young blonde girl, Hansi, a sadist, becomes part of the group and Pierre must decide the difference between the maid and groundskeeper who are paid servants and Rea and Hansi, also paid servants, who may have genuine feelings outside of sex and commodity. This all leads to an annihilation of a shocking conclusion.

Despite the outrageousness of the behavior of the characters, you are never taken away from the story. There's something sick and believable about every part that I've only ever seen in a couple of the Larry Clark films and Catherine Breillat films. Huppert as Helene is fantastic. That woman deserves every lifetime achievement award there is. Her name is synonymous with revolutionary performance and utterly sophisticated career choices. Louis Garrel, who was incredible in "The Dreamers", is also fantastic. Maybe because he is still young and a little overconfident, he matches Huppert's overwhelming presence with a youthful power that is perfect for the role.

Exciting things happening in Paris: this is the new nouvelle vogue.

MURDEROUS MAIDS (dir. by Jean-Pierre Denis)

SISTER MY SISTER (dir. by Nancy Meckler)

MAIDS, THE (dir. by Christopher Miles)

I think it's fantastic that over the past 30 years there have been three great films made all about the Papin sisters. Christine and Lea were two real sisters who worked as maids in France back in the '30s. The story is complex and there are many ways to look at it.

Here's what we know for sure: they murdered the woman of the house and her daughter; they were lesbians; they engaged in incest.

The most recent version of events is the French film "Murderous Maids". The most accessible, it's also the most complete version of the story dealing with the two's oppressive family situation, abuse in the one sister's failed attempt at becoming a nun and finally the stifling reality of being a maid for an utterly uncompassionate family. The brilliant Sylvie Testud stars as the older sister Christine. She is really the focus of the movie as we watch her start to crack and finally go over the edge. She is so totally powerful in this role we have no problem over 2 hours believing an innocent girl with dreams of being a nun could be transformed into a crazed killer. Even her love for her sister is more intense than you could even imagine, more intense than the lesbian incest they committed. The reality for these girls is horrendous as the only other option is prostitution. So they endure the mental abuse as indentured slaves, forced into this role by their mother.

The film is a powerful statement. By the end I was feeling sympathy for Christine and her sister. But the worst was yet to come for them. Separated once arrested, it drove Christine further into madness eventually ending with her death just a few years later at a mental asylum.

"Sister My Sister" came out in the mid '90s as a project based on a play by Wendy Kesselman. In this version of the story, we start with Christine already living in the Danzard's residence who arranges for her sister Lea to join her. Whereas "Murderous Maids" is event after event over a longer period of time, with "Sister My Sister" time almost stands still and feels more like water coming to a boil. In fact, a slow dripping tap seems to be the constant reminder and timekeeper. Daughter of Vanessa Redgrave, Joely Richardson is brilliant as Christine who seems more jealous and only a little less crazy than the Testud version. In fact, there are moments of this film that seem like they were cut from some long lost Merchant/Ivory lesbian erotica. Its soft lights and white garments. But that delicateness has a big pay off when the violence occurs. Though shot fairly simply, the murders come off as incredibly brutal and unexpected. Even the final moments of the film leading up to their capture is in massive contrast to the rest of the film. What's really unique about this film is that there are only four characters, the two sisters, the woman of the house, and her daughter. It's an all-female cast from a female director and a female writer.

The earliest film of the Papin sisters was 1974's "The Maids". Based entirely on the Jean Genet play, it was made for the "American Film Theater" which is really a seal of great quality. Glenda Jackson and Susannah York star as the two Maids and the entire film takes place over one night. The Mistress is not so much physically demanding as in other films. But her arrogance and pretentiousness are so dense that even though she is only in part of the film, it's enough to understand the maids' hatred for her. From there it's a lot of hair-raising psychodrama with the maids taking turns dressing in the Mistress's clothes with the other verbally castigating her and vice versa. Glenda Jackson is brilliant and dominates the film as much as she dominates York's character. Neither insanity nor jealousy, they are fueled by complete frustration and dysfunction.

The true story is quite brutal. The Papin sisters beat to death their Mistress and her daughter. They gouged their eyes out and bashed their heads in beyond recognition. It was a first in French history that a servant would in any real way stand up with violence. Even Sylvie Testud has said in interviews that it was a kind of class struggle. But it could have easily have been adapted into a violent film more interested in the titillation factor. Fortunately, we have three generally fair case studies. If there were only a fourth film that covered the corruption of their trial...

SENTINEL, THE (dir. by Michael Winner)

I was 10 years old the first time I saw this film and I swear it helped shape precisely what I like in certain horror films. A totally lost classic, this film is an artifact from a different time. I make a point of watching it at least once a year and I still find it quite effective.

Cristina Raines, who I also loved in 'Nashville', stars as a world famous model looking for an apartment in Manhattan. She moves into a beautiful old building. But the combination of being alone and unpredictable flashbacks to a traumatic incident in her teens (a suicide attempt as a direct result of walking in on her father having sex with two prostitutes) start pushing her into unreality. As she gets to know the other occupants of the building, they all turn out to be pretty eccentric (exhibitionist Eastern European lesbians, an old man who throws birthday parties for his cat, a blind priest who never leaves his room).

Visions of her dead father and unexplained noises in the house complicate her ability to completely define what is real and what isn't. Strange occurrences and her own psychosis seem to be propelling her towards one event with a Polanski-esque dread that pays off with a great final sequence.

It's worth noting a couple of things about the cast. First of all, there are a lot of great people in this film, some working at their peak and others very early in their careers. Chris Sarandon, John Carradine, Jose Ferrer, Ava Gardner, Sylvia Miles, Burgess Meredith, Eli Wallach as well as fresh faced Christopher Walken, Jerry Orbach and a young Beverly D'Angelo. You also get an unknown Tom Berenger, William Hickey, and Jeff Goldblum.

The other thing, that was something of a controversy at the time, was that in order to depict a gateway to hell, Winner hired actual human "freaks" to play Hell's inhabitants. Like everything else in the film, it's very effective.

I don't know what happened to Cristina Raines' career after this. I guess I don't remember the movie being any sort of hit. But she was great in this and 'Nashville'. I would have loved to see more. (Universal)

SESSION 9 (dir. by Brad Anderson)

It's so rare that I see a contemporary horror film that I like. Everything these days looks like someone who specialized in MTV videos directed it. Impatiently fast edits, stupid WB style acting, all style over substance. Sometimes the soundtracks are the worst parts with their nouveau metal or over-produced hip hop bullshit. It makes you wonder, how did a film as solid as 'Session 9' get made?

Writer and director Brad Anderson has vision. They guy had previously done the amazing indie romantic comedy 'Next Stop, Wonderland' which was one of the best films of 1998. He managed to capture one of Hope Davis' greatest performances. Philip Seymour Hoffman is fantastic as well. So I guess it's not too shocking that this film doesn't have your modern horror clichés and feels more like Kubrick. In fact, his use of color and framing make each scene seem like a beautiful painting.

The story is that of a group of guys who clean out asbestos for a living. They're latest job is an old abandoned mental institution. Half of the price of admission is right there in the location. Danvers Insane Asylum is left almost as the found, overgrown, falling apart, and still totally grim in it's sprawling size and gothic design.

The story starts getting complicated, as there is a constant feeling of other presences from the start. Paranoia is inevitable as little bits of evidence speak to the former inhabitants life causing introspection by the group on their own unhealthy interaction.

Peter Mulan, who was great in Ken Loach's 'My Name Is Joe', brings a lot of depth to the main character. You can tell this guy has a lot of pain that he carries around with him while still being a good

guy and decent boss. David Caruso, Josh Lucas and Brendan Sexton III are very believable as different cogs in the team hierarchy.

The pacing of this film is perfectly timed to give you enough of a pause to really think about what might have happened without getting too slow. It's a '70s horror film made with '90s technology. The underrated Larry Fessenden also has a small role in this, even further validating this unusually eerie experience. Is it possible that even one person at Universal has vision? (Universal)

SHUTTER (dir. by Banjong Pisanthanakun and Parkpoom Wongpoom) I had wanted to review this for Shocktober, but I ran out of time. I wrote a couple of other things for Halloween that I still haven't finished. I'll leak 'em out later in the year.

What with Japan, Korea and to a lesser degree China making a lot of new, hyper-stylish horror flicks, Thailand is starting to get in the mix. Man, "Shutter" is one of the best of the bunch. With elements borrowed from "Ringu", "The Eye" (first and second) and more, it still manages to take some of the old ideas and make them extremely startling and thought-provoking.

The story starts with a young couple, Tun and Jane. They're meeting up with the Tun's school buddies for drinks in a restaurant. What on paper might seem like a funny, drunken reunion is instead a mix of sickness and anxiety. The room is over lit and the camera keeps spinning and spinning like the scene where the kids meet the gangster in "Bully". It sounds like a fun night of drinking but it looks like a headache. It's a warning from the directors that this movie, like many Asian horror flicks, are about perception and things not being what they appear.

Joking around on the drive home, Jane is distracted just long enough to hit a pedestrian on a dark rural road, crashing their car. Looking out the back, she sees what appears to be a lifeless schoolgirl lying in the road. Tun starts to freak out and insists they split.

Days later, Jane is racked with guilt while Tun is in some sort of denial. Their ways of dealing with the accident collide as a photo Tun takes (oh, he's a photographer) of Jane has an anomaly in the print. What at first seems like a flare on closer inspection seems to be the face of the dead girl staring at Jane. The real story starts from here.

It's a creepy as hell tale and is more suited as a primer to contemporary Asian horror cinema for it's faster (though not too fast) pacing. The film also touches on the other films I mentioned. There's the traditional stringy haired ghostly girl doing the creepy crawl a la "Kwaidan". There is the upside down ceiling walk of the ghost. There are the pale images that could be alive or dead as in "The Eye". And those aren't even the most scary moments.

Japan will probably always be the leader in this market as they've got the money and the head start. But with these innovations and well-written stories, Thailand could be as much a competitor as is Korea. The beauty of these movies is that they really don't rely on CG and are better for it.

This DVD is starting to show up everywhere and it's worth checking out. Allegedly there is gonna be a Hollywood remake in the next year or two. That promises to be a pile of crap like everything else Hollywood touches. Check out the original before they do something stupid like dub it in English.

WHO SAYS (It's Good To Be Alive?)
I saw what I had so
I got I got mad so
I guess I went bad so

Now I search for new endeavors
Push my buttons wear my levers

There's nothing to win by
This sort of an outcry
Oh yeah we all know why

Cuz the world a person lives in
Is his brain. Well mine just gives in...

It's clear that I choose to
Live on I'm so used to...
But still it ain't news to

Ditch it say when one incentive's
Gained and gone tho you're inventive

Once born you're addicted
And so you depict it
As good, but who kicked it?

Users just can't see the horror
Tell one if you want to bore her

Who says it's good to be alive?
Same ones who keep it a perpetual jive
Who says it's good to be alive?
It ain't no good. It's a perpetual dive